JULY 1982 NUMBER 53

THE SPACE GAMER

THE MAGAZINE OF ADVENTURE GAMING

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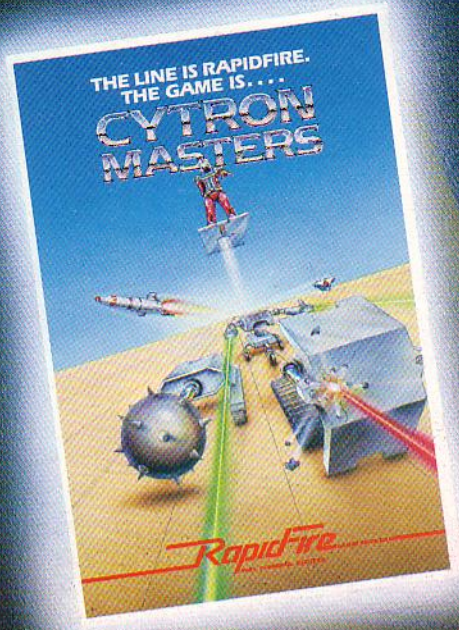
STRIKER

Featured Review

CREATURE THAT ATE SHEBOYGAN VARIANT
THE NEWCOMERS: ADVENTURE FOR *TRAVELLER*
A SUPER NAMED JOHN
MORE COMPUTER AS FAMILIAR
METAL: NEW FEATURE
AND 6 PAGES OF REVIEWS



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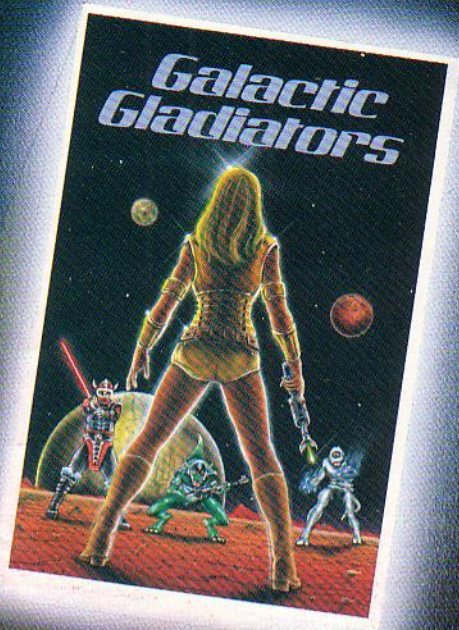

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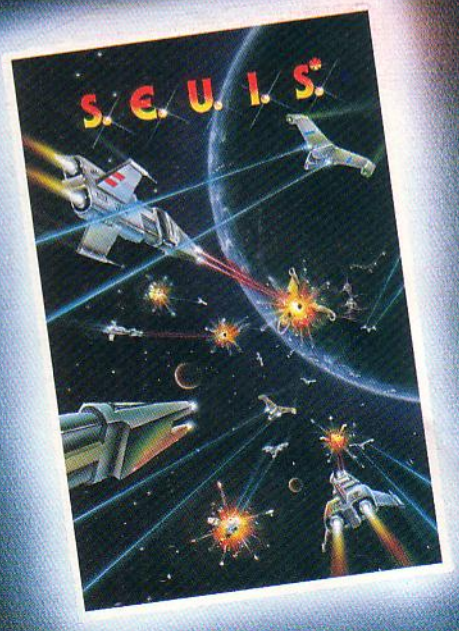

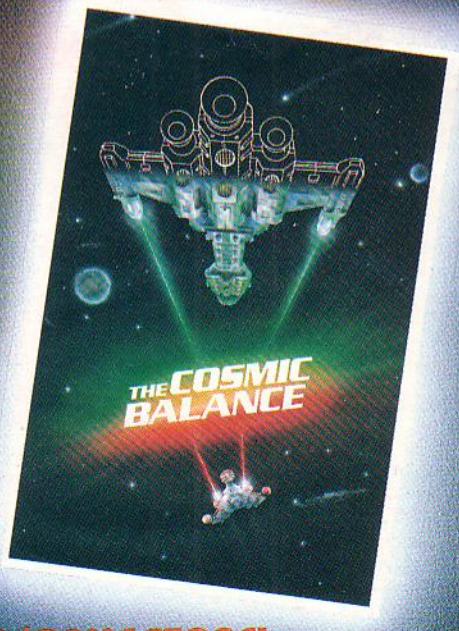

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THE SPACE GAMER

NUMBER 53 — JULY, 1982

IN THIS ISSUE

We couldn't manage to repeat our 48-page effort of last month, but this issue is still packed as full as our crowbars will allow. You'll notice two new items in the contents lineup: The first installment of "Metal," our column on the whys and wherefores of the miniatures industry; and "Scanner," which readers will recognize as the son of our venerable News & Plugs.

This issue also boasts an entertaining piece of superhero fiction, the wrapup to our Marischal Adventures scenarios for *Traveller*, a featured review of GDW's *Striker*, new options for the humans in *The Creature That Ate Sheboygan*, and much more. Happy hunting.

—Aaron Allston

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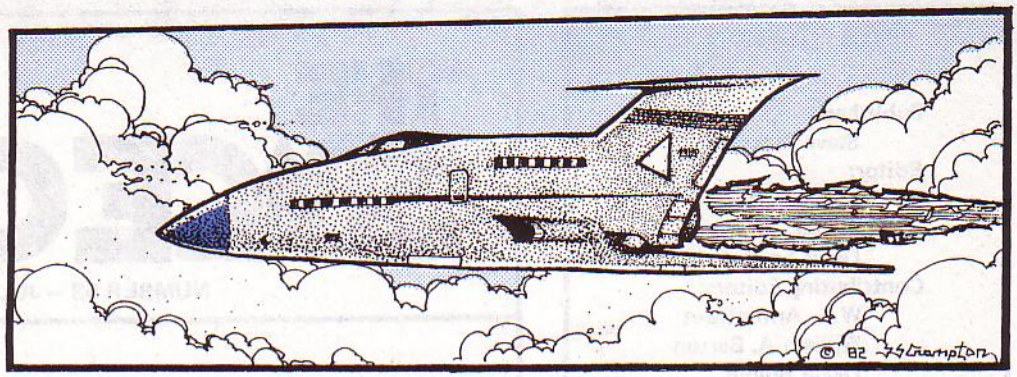
Where We're Going



It's Origins Award time again. The final ballot for the game industry's "Oscars" has been prepared; the nominees are listed on page 39. Every year when award time comes around we hear accusations that the system is "stacked" toward the big companies (or the little ones, or the old ones, or the historical ones . . .). So I did a little analysis of the nominations. I've compared the number of nominations each company received with that company's total number of 1981 releases. (For data on releases, I'm indebted to Dana Lombardy, who graciously gave permission for me to reprint information he tabulated and presented in Issue 9 of the Proceedings of the Awards Committee, Academy of Adventure Gaming Arts & Design.)

Company	R	GN	%
SPI	25	7	28
Judges Guild	19	0	0
TSR	16	0	0
GDW	16	4	25
Metagaming	15	1	7
Yaquinto	13	1	8
Paranoia Press	13	0	0
FASA	12	2	17
Heritage	11	1	9
FGU	10	1	10
Chaosium	9	7	78
Mayfair	9	6	67
Flying Buffalo	8	1	13
Task Force	8	1	13
Group One	8	0	0
Avalon Hill	7	0	0
Simulations Canada	7	0	0
Reilly Associates	6	0	0
Eon	5	0	0
Gamelords	5	0	0
Games Workshop	4	0	0
Simulation Games	4	0	0
Swedish Game Prod.	4	0	0
SJ Games	3	3	100
Hero Games	3	1	34
Midkemia	3	0	0
Dimension Six	3	0	0
Iron Crown	3	1	34

(The following companies had one nomination each, from unknown, but presumably very small, numbers of 1981 releases: Empire Games, Adventure Games, and Quarterdeck Games.)

"R" is that company's total 1981 releases, as tabulated by Dana Lombardy. "GN" is *new* game nominations; I did not count "All-Time Best" nominations because these are not limited to 1981 releases. (I also did not count magazine nominations, since this would give an unfair advantage to the companies that have magazines. But note that TSR and Avalon Hill both get "on the board" if All-Time Best and magazine nominations are counted.) Computer games were also not included. "%" is the ratio of nominations to total releases.

These results were very interesting indeed. There is no strong correlation between size of company and number of nominations; SPI (a giant, at least in 1981) and Chaosium (medium-sized) are tied for greatest number of new game nominations. But the companies with the best *percentage* of nominations are SJ Games, Chaosium, and Mayfair – all medium to small operations. Furthermore, some of the biggest companies didn't make it at all with their 1981 releases. TSR had 16 swings and no hits. Judges Guild was 0 for 19! Even Avalon Hill went 0 for 7 this year. And other large operations only made it by the skin of their teeth; Yaquinto went 1 for 13, Metagaming 1 for 15. Most of the other "name" companies picked up one nomination each, with GDW getting four and FASA two.

Conclusion number one: The nomination process is pretty fair. Since it's open to the public, and nomination ballots are run in most gaming magazines, everybody who wants to has a chance to vote, and nominations are likely to fall, as they should, to the more popular new games. (It's always possible to stuff the ballot box – and companies have blatantly done so in past years – but it's hard to do this *without* being obvious about it.)

Conclusion number two: If the nomination process is fair, then it presents a good picture of what gamers like – and *that* tells us something about the effectiveness of the game companies. It seems to me to be saying "smaller is better." Most of the big companies cranked out lots and lots of games . . . and earned very few if any nominations! Of course, many of the little companies had equally bad batting averages – but the ones that did well, did *very* well. A game mill can't match the output of a design team that *cares*.

Recommendation: Let's find out how to have the best of both worlds. Imagine a game company with the resources and production of TSR . . . and the consistent quality of Chaosium. Wouldn't that be something?

Nominations

The Space Gamer has once again been nominated for Best Magazine Covering Role-Playing Games. We'd sure like to turn that nomination into an award this time; cross your fingers for us. Our sister magazine, *Fire & Movement*, picked up a nomination for Best Magazine Covering Boardgaming – an award it's won for the last three years in a row.

On the game award front, we seem to have done pretty well; SJ Games released three new games in 1981, and got three nominations. ***Car Wars*** has been nominated for two awards: Best Miniatures Rules and Best Science Fiction Board Game. ***Undead*** was nominated as Best

NEXT ISSUE

In August's TSG you're likely to find:

Strategy and tactics for STAR FLEET BATTLES;
"Unnight," adventure scenario for SPACE OPERA;
Helpful creature information for WIZARD'S REALM;
An overview of Heritage USA; and
Several succubi.

Fantasy Board Game. The complete list of nominations is on page 39.

SJ Games News

It's reprint time for ***Car Wars*** and ***Raid on Iran*** – the first printing of ***Car Wars*** sold out in less than ten months. Both games will be slightly reconfigured. By popular demand, the ROI rules will be in a booklet like those of our later games, rather than on a single sheet. ***Car Wars*** will look pretty much the same as before, but we got a little extra space on the inside sheet by moving the cover blurb to the Pocket Box label, and that space will be used to double the size of the movement chart, making it easier to use.

Origins Releases

If everything goes well, we'll have a batch of new products for Origins release. ***Illuminati*** will appear then . . . and wait until you see the cover art. We'll also have two new ***Car Wars*** products. ***Sunday Drivers***, which appeared in TSG issue 50, will be released as a boxed supplement; the rules will be expanded, and there'll also be a set of full-color counters (painted by Denis Loubet, of course) and *two* 21" x 32" maps that combine to show downtown Midville in full ***Car Wars*** scale. That's got to be the biggest map ever to appear in a minigame. We'll also be releasing something with the thrilling name of "Car Wars Expansion Set 1." This will contain an assortment of road sections (straight, curved, crossroad, and entrance/exit), plus a B&W counter sheet with lots of extra smoke, mines, spikes, chain, oil slicks, et cetera. It'll be a $3.00 product, in the old faithful ziplock bag. ***Sunday Drivers*** warrants a box, but the expansion stuff doesn't need one.

There should also be several new sets of Cardboard Heroes miniature figures . . . at least three new sets, and maybe more. Look for at least two new fantasy sets, at least one and probably two new ***Traveller*** sets, and – who knows? It all depends on what the artists get finished. Painting those little jewels is a *slow* job.

–Steve Jackson

GAME MASTER

GAME MASTER exists to answer questions on your favorite games. If you have a rules question or play problem, send it in. Questions to be answered will be chosen on the basis of general interest. They will be first referred to the game publisher or designer. If no response is received, GAME MASTER will offer its own interpretation of the rule. Sorry – no individual replies are possible.

Star Force

When StarForces expend x-amount of their TeleValues each Tac-Turn, do they return to their full value (32 stellar, 64 battle) at the beginning of the next Tac-Turn?

Michael J. Wolff

(No reply received from SPI . . . which, under the circumstances, is understandable.) Close reading of the rules would seem to make it clear that the answer is "yes." The general rule for section 12.0 and rules 12.21 and 12.35 apparently take it for granted that new TeleValue "points" will be available at the beginning of the next Tac-Turn, and nowhere is there provision for reduction of points between Tac-Turns.

SJ

Duel Magical

Ragnarok Enterprises has provided Contributing Editor Ron Pehr with errata for ***Duel Magical***, which he has passed on to us:

2.0: A level of enhancement costs 20 points as stated in section 2.3, *not* 10 as stated here.

3.5: When a spell is both augmented and reversed, the augmented damage is taken by the caster in addition to any damage from the attack which reversed it, which might also be augmented. Multiple augmentation is possible when multiple spells are present.

3.6: Spells need to be rolled for control only at the point of initial casting, and will remain controlled for the rest of their duration. Uncontrolled defensive spells defend the caster's opponent, or a random opponent in a multiplayer scenario. Note: Round up when using the Spell Control Table. Read Spell Gost for Spell Level.

Special thanks to Ronald Pehr for pointing out these errors. Please write if you have any questions or comments.

A second edition will be out in the Fall of 1982 with expanded charts for easier reference.

Permission is granted to copy any part of the rules or the Mage Record Sheets for personal, non-commercial use.

Azhanti High Lightning

On page 42 of Supplement 5, ***Lightning Class Cruisers***, it states that 27 trips of the 4 fuel shuttles will completely refuel the cruiser. 350 tons per shuttle x 27 trips x 4 shuttles = 37,800) tons of fuel (which is a reasonable amount for a ship this size).

As for the storage of *all* this fuel: The section of the book that refers to "emergency refueling" states that there are 43 possible decks to be damaged. If you actually count the number of decks (10-13, 22-24, 26-34, 48-56, 58-65 found on page 15), you will only count 33 decks. OK, so they lost 10 decks.

Each deck holds 400 tons of fuel (page 18), so 33 x 400 = 13,200 tons of fuel that can actually be stored as the plans sit. If 43 decks exist as previously mentioned, then 43 x 400 = 17,200 tons of fuel. According to these figures, there is nowhere near enough room for the actual amount of fuel that the shuttles bring in. At the rate of 400 tons of fuel per deck, with 37,800 tons of fuel necessary for proper operation, 37,800 / 400 = 94 decks. According to what actually exists on the plans, 61 decks are missing!

Let's try to find a solution. Does each deck hold more fuel than the book states? With 33 decks and 37,800 tons of fuel, each deck must hold (37,800 / 33 =) 1,146 tons of fuel. Now to figure out the area needed. On page 33 of the first edition of ***High Guard***, one ton of liquid hydrogen takes up two 1.5 x 1.5 x 2.3 meter squares. I suspect that the deck plans in AHL are done to this scale, so let's see if there are 2,292 squares on the actual deck plan (2). Counting the actual number of squares on this deck yields a total of 506. This means that only 2.53 tons of fuel are stored on each deck. Another number for total fuel storage can be derived from this result. 253 tons of fuel per deck x 33 gives 8,349 tons of fuel: a meagre 22% of the required fuel.

This is where the thing gets confusing, and no solution presents itself. *How does the captain of this ship get all 37,800 tons of fuel into it?*

Now that you have the tough one, here is the other: When players start to realize that all the elevators are full of enemies, or busy, or broken, the only route between decks is the hatches and adjoining ladders. Even though this is rather obvious, GDW did not include any rules governing actions on the ladders. Such items as:

a) How long does it take to climb a ladder and what amount of APs?

b) How does line of sight get affected?

c) What special rules and AP costs are needed for combat on ladders?

I have always made up a whole set of rules for ladder actions, but at clubs I always get into large, battle-to-the-death arguments with other referees. I would really appreciate something official.

Rick Miller

The Lightning class cruisers have additional fuel storage in areas not shown on the deck plans, such as the large "fin" illustrated on the box art. We did not include these because we were trying to hold down to a minimum the number of maps in the game.

To the other questions:

a) See page 6, rule B-5. Climb Ladder: A character climbs (up or down) one meter per complete action phase spent climbing a ladder. The number of action phases required to climb one deck level depends upon the separation between decks (see the Technical Manual).

b) The normal line of sight rules apply (see pages 8-9). A closed hatch, obviously, blocks LOS. Field of fire is a straight line.

c) Whatever you've made up will serve admirably, if they are logical and well-thought out. I would say that a character cannot use a weapon while moving on a ladder (try climbing a vertical ladder with one hand, and you'll see what I mean). In order to fire, I would say, a character must stop and lock himself in position, AP cost depending on what weapon has to be aimed and fired, and how secure the character wants to be (firing a pistol wouldn't take much preparation, but trying to aim and fire a rifle or heavier weapon would require the character to be well-anchored, say, by hooking an elbow around a ladder rung).

Loren K. Weisman, GDW

Equipment We'll Never See

by Steve Jackson

If *America, 1982* were a role-playing game – played by warriors and wizards or starfarers and spacers – some enterprising GM would naturally create a list of silly items available to the characters: in-the-shell egg scramblers, cheese straighteners, root beer mug frosters, smokeless ashtrays, etc.

Unfortunately, most of these things do exist. So who's to say that mankind in mystic realms or the far future has any more common sense?

Here's a list of fantasy and SF weapons and equipment we hope we'll never see:

Fantasy Items

Dragon Breath Mouthwash

This gives the user a case of halitosis which will drop superheroes at twenty feet or ordinary mortals at thirty-five.

Magic Beans

These do what all beans do, only more so. *Much, much* more so. Get the picture?

Redundancy Pendant/Medallion

This causes its victims (those you use it on) to repeat themselves and say things more than once. That is, you hit somebody with it and he does things over and over. Beings under its influence repeat themselves.

The Amulet of Doctor Scholl

Allows its owner to wear Magic Boots even though they are two sizes too small. Also protects against sorcerously induced athlete's foot and corns.

SF Weapons

The Probability Inverter

A devastating device which does exactly what its name indicates. Its victims clearly have *no* chance of survival, and, thus, it is completely ineffective.

The Ray Gun

If your opponent isn't named Ray, this one won't do you much good.

The Hand Grenade Fusion Bomb

The HGFB, the most portable atomic device known, will produce total destruction in an area one kilometer in diameter, with blast damage extending another six kilometers in all directions. Unfortunately, the average infantryman can only throw it about twenty yards.

The Negacube

Like the negasphere, it is made of antimatter. However, because of its shape, the Negacube can be stacked neatly in the closet, out of the way, until you – now, where did that thing go . . . ?

The Slug-Thrower

The less said, the better.

All of this leads (as you've probably guessed) into our next contest. It's simple: Simply create the kitsch of the dungeon and the starship, as typified by the examples above. But, as in our last contest, there's a catch: Once you've created this example of man's ingenuity, you have to sell it – write a hard-sell sales pitch of 100 words or less, in precisely the manner you've come to expect from late-night Eversharp Knife commercials and Mad Bill's Used Cars advertisements. Entries will be judged in terms of cleverness of the object's sales pitch in contrast with the absolute lack of utility of the object.

The first-place winner will receive a $50 certificate from SJ Games; the second-place winner receives one for $20. These may be used for any product produced by SJ Games, including games, subscriptions to TSG and F&M, bumper stickers, etc. Entries must be postmarked by no later than August 15, 1982. All entries become the property of TSG; we reserve the right to award fewer or no prizes if we receive no entries of publishable quality.

Contest Results

The contest in issue 49 was the last in a series of related contests. In issue 44, readers were asked to solve a constellation word-search puzzle. In issue 46, the object was to *compose* such a puzzle. And the contest for issue 49 was the solution of the puzzle from *that* contest.

Our winner, with 66 game-names from the puzzle, is Francis Small of Santa Rosa, CA. Francis was not only the only person to send us a list of games matching the solution provided by the puzzle designer, but he found a valid game title that the designer had overlooked; in addition, he provided a list of peculiar words and phrases he'd found in the puzzle and supplied some game ideas to go with them. (We'll let you know when we decide to bring out ***Rat's Rod*** and ***The Roly MP***, Francis.)

The correct solution to the word-search puzzle was:

1) ABM
2) ANTS
3) ARMS LAW
4) ARTIFACT
5) ASTEROID
6) BELTER
7) BUSHIDO
8) CARWARS
9) CERBERUS
10) CITADEL
11) DARKOVER
12) DEMONS
13) DIADEM
14) DUNE
15) DUNGEON
16) ELRIC
17) GEV
18) GODSFIRE
19) GONDOR
20) HELLTANK
21) HERO
22) HOAX
23) HOLYWAR
24) HOTSPOT
25) ICEWAR
26) INFINITY
27) INTRUDER
28) IT
29) JOURNEY
30) JUNTA
31) KILLER
32) LANKHMAR
33) MAYDAY
34) MELEE
35) MINDWAR
36) ODYSSEUS
37) OGRE
38) OLYMPICA
39) OUTREACH
40) QUAZAR
41) QUEST
42) QUIRKS
43) RISK
44) RIVETS
45) ROBOTS
46) SAGA
47) SAURON
48) SLAG
49) SNAPSHOT
50) SORCERER
51) SQWURM
52) STARFALL
53) STARFIRE
54) STARWARS
55) STOMP
56) TIMELAG
57) TIMEWAR
58) TITAN
59) UFO
60) UNDEAD
61) VAMPIRE
62) WARLOCK
63) WARPWAR
64) WIZARD
65) YTHRI
66) ZORK

For his rather thorough effort, Francis receives a year's subscription to TSG and some strange looks.

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Look for these new games* from GDW:

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The Journal of the Travellers' Aid Society
Issue 13

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Prison Planet
Traveller Adventure 8

The Traveller Adventure
Science Fiction Adventure in the Far Future

*These new books and games will be released this summer, and many will be available at Origins

and take advantage of these convention events:

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Trillion Credit Squadron Tournament
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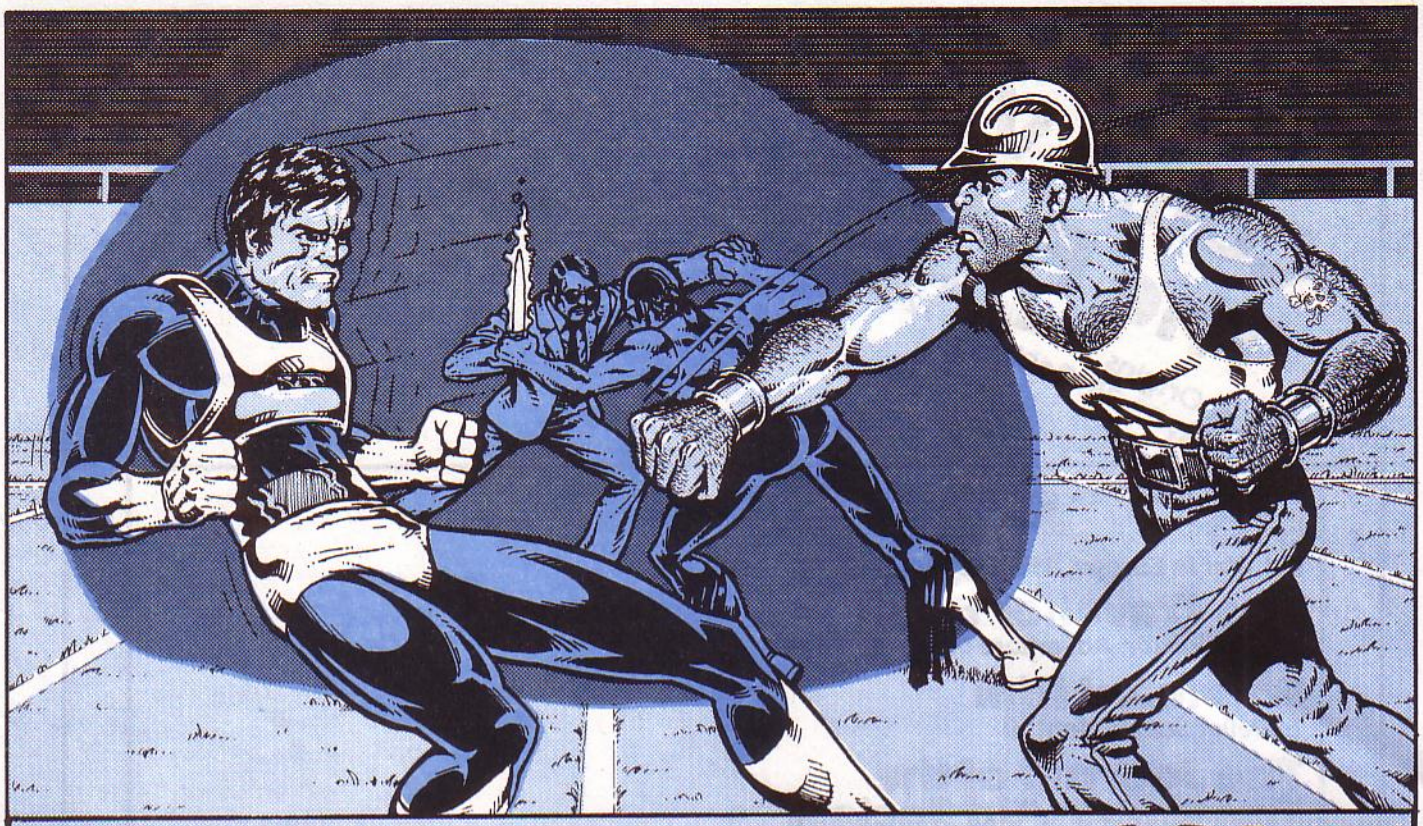


A SUPER NAMED JOHN

STORY: DAVID MYERS

ART: DENIS LOUBET

EDITOR: AARON ALLSTON

Things happen fast in super land.

My beeper kicks in at 10:00 a.m. Friday – right in the middle of solid state physics lab. I sneak out of class and high-tail it to the nearest payphone to contact my message service. The message service says that someone called "the ultra network" wants me to get in touch. They say it's urgent.

"Unfortunately, I couldn't get them to leave a number," says the answering service.

"Too bad," say I. "I can't imagine who it could be." I hang up the phone and look at my watch. 10:12.

It takes me fifteen minutes to get my car out of the crowded university parking lot and rush home. I throw the protective cover off my ultra network transceiver and type in my 11-digit log-on code.

The transceiver whirrs and whines and returns:

"Name?"

I don't have a name. Well, not a super name – not yet. I only passed my regionals last month. I type "NA" and hit return.

The transceiver chatters out my message:

"*Alert Orange: Code Y****ID 111987769/RAZOR escaped Rahway 1/28/85***Focus: *knife*. Focus location: *New Orleans* (no coordinates). Focus powers: *flight, invisibility, density**** ULTRACOM 1.29.85-oy12"

The transceiver stops.

I acknowledge the transmission, log off, and clear my throat.

This looks like a job for . . . well, *me. Stonefist? Boxer? BlackBelt?* Whatever.

I mull over a few more names as I stuff my harness in the fake typewriter case I've rigged up for it: *Wrangler – Sinbad – The Creole Kid* . . .

Nothing sounds right.

It's 10:45. The next plane to N.O. is a shuttle leaving at 11:39 and arriving at 12:01. Or I can be there in an hour or so by car.

I take my car. Fake typewriter case on the seat beside me.

I'm thirty minutes outside Baton Rouge and a tire blows.

Great. I should have bought the radials.

And do I have a jack in my car? No. Somewhere the big guys flit around in their rocket jets and I'm left to thumb a ride on I-10. Unless . . .

I change into my density harness in the car.

With the harness turned up full, my feet make little tracks in the concrete, as though I were walking on soft clay. I lift up the front end of the car and prop it on my knee while I fix the tire. It's awkward, and I'm a little winded when the job's done. (The harness pulls a lot of calories on max.) But I recover quickly enough and speed the rest of the way to N.O.

Arrival: 12:15.

The Book lists the appropriate contact for my rank super (1.0, regional). It's some goof called The Squid. Yuck.

The Book gives his address (in code, of course) and I translate it on the fly. I get an answer as I'm zipping by N.O. International: 2510 Constantinople. Rand McNally tells me how to get there and I pull in the driveway at 12:25.

An old, two-story antebellum home looms over me as I get out of the car. It's locked up tight. Even the windows are barred and shuttered. I get no tingles

from my sixth sense and no one answers the doorbell – front or back.

Great.

Luckily, I have some scrap paper and a gnawed pencil in my glove compartment. I leave a message in the mailbox:

"Arrived noon today. Will check back at dusk . . . "

And how do I sign it?

Warrior? Guardian? Squid Boy might impress him.

I sign it "John (111-5435-666-0)."

Not exactly spiffy, but Squid should be able to check my code through ultra and realize that I'm legit.

Now what to do?

I have an oyster Po-boy and a Jax beer for lunch and then drive slowly up and down Canal Street looking for someone who looks like a squid.

Dusk and still no luck.

I go back to the house on Constantinople. My message is gone from the mailbox but there's no reply left behind. And still no one at home. I wait thirty minutes – until the streets are completely dark.

Nothing.

So that's what this Squid fellow thinks of my help? What can I expect when I don't even have a name?

No going back to Baton Rouge, though. I decide to continue this mission on my own. I change into my harness in my car. My sports jacket effectively covers its dull grey shine so that I can operate in relative anonymity.

The Book says that the first thing to do in a situation like this is to use your contacts to gain information. Okay. I don't have any contacts, but I suppose I could round some up real fast. Where would the criminal element hang out in New Orleans?

The French Quarter, natch.

I drive to the Quarter and spend the next forty-five minutes trying to find a place to park. I finally manage to find one on the west side of Canal. It's past eight o'clock by the time I stroll down Royal Street and hit my first bar.

Four hours and several bars later I am sitting next to a relatively attractive exotic dancer. We are watching another exotic dancer dance. And, in order to elicit the greatest amount of information possible, I have managed to get both of us drunk. Because of this, my danger sense tingles annoyingly – so I shut it off. I know my limits.

"So," I say. "Suppose I had a little job for someone to do –" I wink. "Say I needed a good knifeman, for instance. You know where I might find a good knifeman?"

"No," says my companion. And she slides to the next table.

This is sort of the way it's been going the whole night.

I ponder my next move over another beer. While I am doing so, my luck changes. Two men come and sit beside me. One is small and slim. The other is tall and *big*. The big one wears a white construction helmet.

"John?" says the slim man. "It is *you*, isn't it?"

"Yes," I say, rising to meet him.

"Don't get up," he says. "We don't want to blow our cover, do we?"

"Our cover?"

"I'm the Squid," says the man, holding out a finely manicured hand. I shake the hand loosely. It doesn't feel slimy.

"And this is my friend, Jack."

I reach for Jack's hand. Jack looks suspiciously at the Squid before he shakes. My hand doesn't quite cover his palm. His thumb is as big as my wrist.

Big hands, think I. But I try not to embarrass the fellow by staring.

"Glad to meet you, Jack," say I.

"Uh-huh," says Jack.

"So how's it going?" says Squid.

"Well," I say in a hushed voice, "I've been looking for Razor."

Squid nods. "Any luck?"

"None," I admit.

"Razor is a slippery fellow," says Squid. "What we have to do is make sure that he doesn't get his knife back. You know where the knife is?"

"The knife?" I say. "You mean his focus?"

"Right. That's good super talk, John. You know where his focus is?"

I shake my head. My head hurts when I shake it. I stop.

"It's at my house," says Squid.

"*Your* house?" I say in amazement. "But I was just there."

"No kidding. Look, John, Razor has some friends in this town. Some big friends. Some of them even as big as Jack here. You know what I mean, John?"

I nod my head. (Same results as shaking my head; I stop again.)

"So, if you don't mind, we'd like to use you to move the knife to, uh, St. Iberville."

"St. Iberville," I say. "Why?"

"Because you're an unknown, see? And Razor and his friends won't suspect you to have the knife. Or to take it to St. Iberville, see what I mean?"

"Sure," say I, careful not to nod my head. (Actually, it sounds like a pretty dumb plan to me. But if this guy's the ranking super . . .)

"Good," says Squid. "So here's the key to my house. Oh, and the door kind of gets stuck sometimes, so you have my permission to just sort of push the door open." Squid winks at me. "You can sort of *push* the door open, can't you, John?"

"Sure," I say. "You should have seen me fix my car this morning –"

I get no further.

Into the bar walks a menacing figure. He wears a hooded mask and a scowl. I notice him first and alert the Squid. The Squid immediately hides his face. Jack has already disappeared somewhere – his chair is empty.

Squid pulls me down onto the table next to him and whispers in my ear. "That's *him*, John. That's Razor! And *he's* got the knife. You try to get his attention. I'll sneak around from behind."

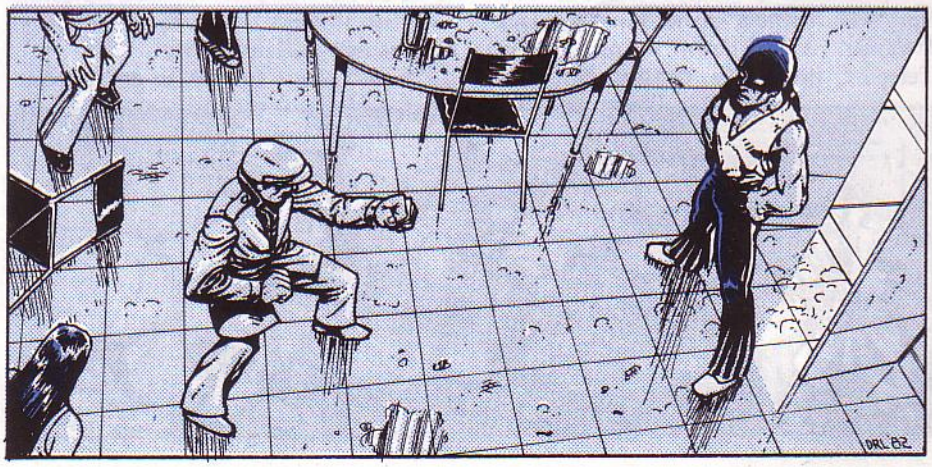
My adrenalin begins to pump. And, instinctively, my danger sense switches on and takes precedence. It's whining like the devil. I turn my harness up high underneath my jacket and walk slowly toward Razor. The wooden floor of the bar creaks underneath me. As I approach Razor, my danger sense slows down and allows me to think on my own. I concentrate my sixth sense powers on protection.

Razor has been surveying the interior of the bar. Now his eyes fix on me.

He walks toward me.

My sixth sense goes to protection *plus*.

Razor wears a small pendant at his



neck. And carries strapped to his thigh a knife that glows from inside its sheath.

When the villain is at an appropriate distance, I move *en garde*.

Razor looks surprised.

Then the dark eyes behind his mask catch sight of something to his right and he whirls in that direction.

I switch my sixth sense from protection to vision and can half-see an invisible Jack aiming a roundhouse punch at the villain's chin.

Razor tries to defend but Jack's attack catches him by surprise and sends him reeling back in my direction. I manage to tear the knife from his thigh as he rolls past.

Squid squeals in glee from across the bar.

"To me, John! To me!"

I throw the knife to him and then turn back to make sure Razor stays down.

My sixth sense tingles but I don't have time to switch it to protection as Jack pounds me from behind with a kick that knocks me directly onto the prone Razor. My fall brings my nose up against the small pendant on Razor's chest.

It's a small silver squid.

I turn to see the slender man I had thought was the Squid salute me. He kisses the glowing knife he holds in his hand and then flies out of the bar. That's flies *through the air* out of the bar.

"You want to get off me?" says the real Squid. "You're heavy."

"Oh, yeah." I turn down my harness and slowly get to my feet.

My stomach feels a little queasy.

"He said he was you – " I try to explain.

The Squid cuts me short.

"He's not. His name is Razor. The knife is his focus – "

"Flight, invisibility, density," I say. "I know. The ultra – "

The look on Squid's face makes me stop.

He continues slowly after I've shut up. "His friend's name is Jack. Jack Hammer. Also known as AirHammer. Teleport, invisibility, density. Now, are you ready to help me get the knife back?"

I nod. Even though my head hurts.

"Then come on, rookie."

Squid pulls me out of the bar. Behind us the normals are just beginning to come to their senses and call the police. The bar's bouncer shakes an angry fist at us as we hurry away.

We walk down the middle of Bourbon St. at a steady clip – toward Canal.

"What's your flavor?" asks Squid.

My flavor?

"You mean my name?" ask I.

"No. I mean your style, your flow, your stuff."

"Oh," say I. "Density mostly. And I'm hard to hit. Plus – "

"A martial artist," says Squid in disgust. "Perfect. Ultra could have at least sent me a telekinetic. This caper needs somebody with a little intelligence."

I smile.

"I guess the picking's kind of slim down here," I say.

"Tell me about it."

"Well, maybe they thought that since Razor and AirHammer had density that it would be sort of like fighting fire with fire, right?" I smile again.

"More like fighting stupidity with stupidity," says the Squid.

We walk the rest of the way in silence. The Quarter is loud and neon, despite the fact that it's past 2 a.m. But we are soon past Canal Street and into the dark business district. The Superdome rises out of the concrete buildings directly ahead of us.

Squid refuses to look at me and he's walking so fast that I have trouble keeping up.

"Look," I say, "I'm sorry. Okay?"

No answer.

"I said I'm sorry."

"Just for your information," says the Squid, "and because you might need the information to save your life, I do darkness. Like this . . . "

A thick black cloud envelopes the two of us as we trot past Veterans Hospital. I can see through the cloud by using my sixth sense – but just barely.

"I can't do it forever, so don't count on it," says the Squid. "I also kill."

The Squid immediately clears away his darkness and stares at me, waiting for an answer.

"I don't," I say.

"It figures," says Squid. "The newer guys never do. So you'll have to take AirHammer and leave Razor to me."

"But the Book says – "

"I don't care about the Book!" says the Squid harshly.

Squid leads us up a broad concrete ramp to the east entrance of the Superdome. Nothing's going on inside the dome tonight and the walkway is totally deserted. Fifty yards away a huge neon sign by the Interstate advertises a Tulane basketball game for tomorrow night at seven. The sign highlights the Squid's features with a harsh, yellow glare.

"Excuse me," I say. "I realize I've made a mistake tonight, but I don't think a little walk and talk in the dark is the way to rectify it. Both Razor and AirHammer have super mobility. We don't. They can just run and we'll never be able to catch them."

"They're not going to run," says the Squid.

I think about shutting up and just following orders. But the Squid infuriates me – especially with this talk of killing. It's totally against the Book. And, besides, the night air gives me a second wind. I feel like fighting something.

"Why *not*?" I ask him. "Why shouldn't they run?"

"Because *they* kill," says the Squid. "And they won't leave here until they do."

"Kill who?"

"*Me*," says the Squid. "Maybe you too, as long as you're with me."

I consider it. Well, what did I expect? After all, this is super land, right? We're in front of the Superdome, right? I guess you play for keeps here. And, whichever way the horse bucks, I'm on it for the ride.

"So I take AirHammer, huh?"

"You got it, kid."

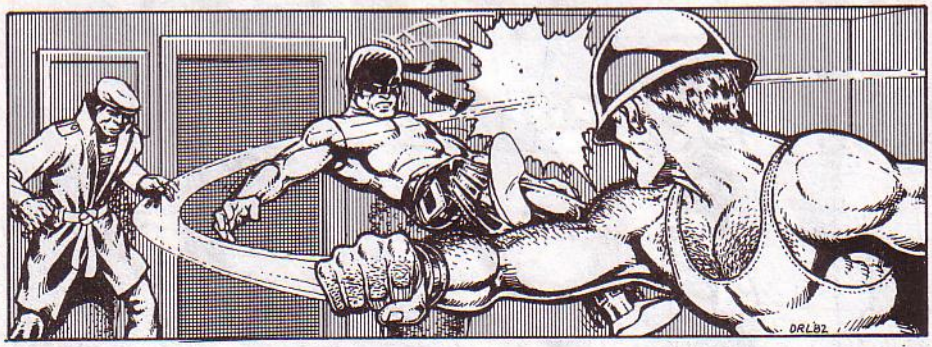
The Squid surveys the area.

We can see a large portion of downtown New Orleans from our vantage point high atop the ramp. It's a bright night now – the moon just came out. And the Squid doesn't like the looks of it.

He frowns.

"Too much light," he mumbles. "Have to go inside."

"It's public property," I say immediately, remembering the super code against the destruction of such things. "Besides, the doors are probably locked, and I'm not densifying to – "



"Like this door?" says the Squid, pushing one glass door open. It swings freely. "I do luck, too." He grins and holds the door open for me as I duck inside.

It's a big, pitch-black cave. But the darkness doesn't bother me as long as I keep my sixth sense tuned to vision. And it doesn't bother Squid at all. He skips down to the floor of the dome six steps at a time. I follow as best I can.

"What's next?" I ask, once we reach bottom.

"We wait," says the Squid.

We don't wait long.

There are three short booms up above us on the mezzanine level – followed by total silence.

"Our friends have found their own entrance," says the Squid. "I don't think they read your Book."

We wait some more. Still, nothing happens.

I get restless.

"Keep your defenses up and use the darkness," says the Squid.

"Don't tell me what to do," say I.

"By the way," says the Squid, "don't you have a *name*?"

"No," I say. "Uh, I mean yes – John."

"As in 'portable'?" says the Squid with a laugh.

I don't get to reply about the price of fish. Razor whistles by my nose and goes directly at the Squid on the fly.

Simultaneously, two things happen: Squid is surrounded by a dark, inky blackness and AirHammer appears directly in front of me, already swinging his wrecking-ball fist.

Harness up full, I block his punch successfully and launch a counterattack. After a couple of exchanges, the patterns become clear.

AirHammer is obviously stronger than I am – harness and all – but only if he doesn't use his other powers – teleport and invisibility (which obviously diminish his strength). And I'm *always* quicker than he is, which never lets him surprise me.

AirHammer realizes these things too, of course. So he drops the cutesy stuff and begins to sledgehammer, toe-to-toe style.

Fine with me.

I just block and wait for him to get tired. Then I counterpunch with some Kung Fu jabs and beat him back. He rests and comes at me again.

So it goes.

I glance over my shoulder and see the Squid and Razor locked in a deadly, close-in battle. And the Squid, despite his greater speed, appears to be getting the worst of it.

I beat off another of AirHammer's rushes and try to think. Just like it says in the Book: *analyze*.

The only real advantage the bad guys have here is mobility. And they've given that up in order to engage us. So, according to the Book, that must leave *us* with an advantage.

Obviously, it's not strength. And only marginally speed. Our advantage has to be something more subtle. Hmmm . . .

AirHammer tries one of his invisible charges and almosts stuns me before I find him on my variable sixth sense. And, once I have his range, I can put enough pressure on him to force his energy out of invisibility and back into density/protection.

AirHammer backs up to rest and I think some more.

What did Squid say? *Use the darkness.* Let's see, Squid can see out of his smoke screen. And I have my sixth sense which lets me do the same thing. Let's call it an advantage and find a way to use it.

But is it enough of an advantage to help?

AirHammer can still see me, well enough to hit me, even in the relative darkness of the Superdome interior.

(I pause a moment in my thoughts to dodge a couple of folding chairs AirHammer sends twirling at me. They miss wildly – and then I hear Razor curse loudly behind me as the two chairs almost bean *him*.)

Back to the analysis: just as AirHammer can see me, Razor can see the Squid – whenever the Squid must let his darkness lapse.

(AirHammer teleports behind me. But, with my harness on high *and* my sixth sense on damage resistance, there's no way he can hurt me before I find him again.)

So, they can see us, and we can see them – even when they try to pull their little invisible tricks. But, wait – when they're invisible, *they can't see each other!*

Hmmm . . .

The right moment would be when AirHammer is invisible – like, for instance, *now!*

I throw everything into a sudden attack.

And it works. I knock AirHammer reeling – directly toward the Squid and Razor.

He might hit either of them, of course; but then the Squid should see him coming and Razor shouldn't, so it should be the Squid who gets out of the way.

I have to hope that the Squid is looking in the right direction. But then the Squid, of course, is lucky.

And he is.

And he does.

And Razor has no defense against an invisible, tumbling AirHammer. The two of them collide with a dull smack.

Acting quickly, Squid uses the moment to pluck away Razor's knife.

And, suddenly, the party's over.

Once he sees which way the wind has blown, AirHammer disappears in a quick series of teleports up and out of the Superdome, leaving behind the weak and defenseless Razor.

But we still have a problem.

The Squid has been hurt. Hurt bad. I see blood on his chest and splattered over his thighs.

And now he stands over Razor with angry eyes and a knife in his hands. It wouldn't take much for a super to kill a normal like Razor is without his focus.

I take one step forward, asking myself if I can afford to actually *attack* my ranking super on my first case.

The Squid throws the knife at me.

Hilt first. Easy to catch.

"Hold on to it until I get this slime to the authorities," says the Squid. He picks Razor up off the Superdome floor and pushes him roughly past me.

Razor spits at my feet. He's not exactly in tip-top shape either. His spittle is spotted with red.

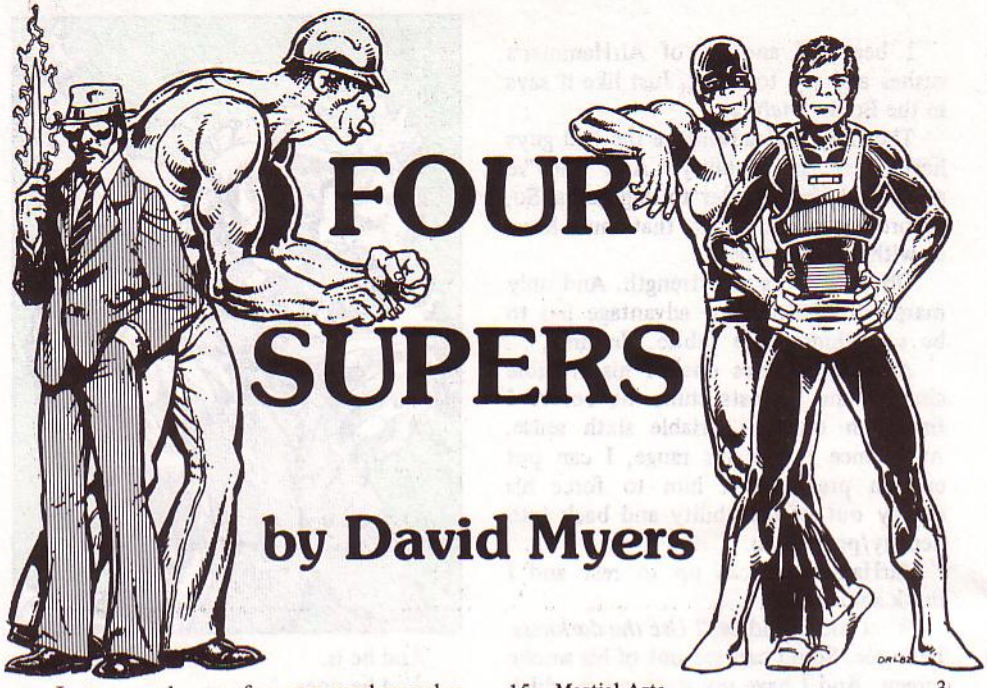
"Hammer's gonna be back," he says to no one in particular. "With *friends*."

"Shut up," says the Squid. "Or else I eat your tongue."

Razor whirls on him. "You're dead, fishbait. And you, kid," he says, slowly turning to face me. "There's certain people that are going to *know* about you. Your name's *mud*, kid."

I consider it.

You know what? I think I like it.



FOUR SUPERS

by David Myers

Just as a bonus for our readers who play superhero RPGs, we've had the four major characters of "A Super Named John" worked up for three appropriate systems: ***Champions, Villains & Vigilantes,*** and ***Superhero 2044.*** John is given the full treatment in each system; the other three characters are given rougher and more flexible statistics.

Sharp-eyed readers will note that there is some variation in abilities as the characters are rendered into each system; some things are lost and gained in translation. As the three systems are not terribly compatible, the distinct versions of the characters may not be able to perform exactly as noted in the story; so this is not exactly a means to recreate the story. Instead, we're offering some quick and useful NPCs similar to those in the tale. (For those who are interested, the author is a ***Champions*** player, so the characters will adhere best to that system.)

John

Champions

Characteristics:

15 STR	5		
20 DEX	30	12 P D	9
19 CON	18	10 E D	6
10 BOD	–	5 SPD	20
14 INT	4	13 REC	12
14 EGO	8	38 END	–
10 PRE	–	37 STN	9
10 COM	–		

Pts	*Powers*	*End*
20	Elemental Control – defensive psi abilities	
	1: Ego Defense, +13	–
	2: Danger Sense	–
	3: UV Vision	–
9	4: Force Field, 5 PD/5 ED, 0 END	–
15	Martial Arts	3
10	+2 skill levels w/martial arts	–
40	(60) Density Increase, 4 levels, ¼ END, OIF harness	2

100+ Disadvantages:	*Pts*
Hunted by Razor, 14-	30
Hunted by Airhammer, 14-	30
Unsure of self (common)	10
2 times STUN, energy attacks	30
Secret ID	15

Villains & Vigilantes

Strength	13
Constitution	13
Intelligence	14
Dexterity	15
Charisma	10
Hit Bonuses	+3
Direct Damage	+1
Other Damage	+1
% secret entrances	2
% traps	10
% hit with devices	0
Movement	34"

Level 1
Hit points: 6 (Hit dice: 1)
Experience: 0

Power potential	55
To hit modifier	-15%
Defensive modifier	+10%

Healing rate: 1 per day

Origin type: Accidental scientific

Powers:

1. *Chemical change* (device: harness)
The harness has a range of only 1" (5 ft.) and can only significantly effect its wearer. Its effects are as follows:
+26 Str (2x normal)
+26 Con (2x normal)

This adds +10 to John's Hit Bonuses and +8 to his Direct Damage. Cost of the device is 4 PR per use. It comes with a 40 pt. battery but may run off John's own power points in an emergency at a cost of 8 PR per use.

2. *Heightened senses*
John's scientific accident permanently modified three of his senses as follows:
Touch: picks up short range changes in air pressure *(cannot be surprised by physical attack)*
Sight: infra-red vision *(opponents do not get their invisibility adjustment in hth combat; +10% night attacks)*
Smell: senses chemical changes in the human body which connote fear, anger, anxiety, etc. *(+20% close-range negotiations; +10% hth combat)*
None of these heightened senses is automatically "on." Each costs 1 PR per use.

Superhero 2044

Type: Toolmaster

Vigor	20
Stamina	20
Endurance	20
Mentality	21
Charisma	11
Ego	15
Dexterity	23

Special Bonuses and Abilities*

1. *+20 Stamina* as martial artist (defend only)

2. *Sixth sense*
This operates as a transformation attack (-2) on John's opponent. If successful, the attack will deliver information about the opponent which varies according to the extent of the success as follows:

(0)	the opponent's presence is known
(+1)	the opponent's exact position is known
(+3)	the opponent's powers are known
(+5)	the opponent's immediate (within the next 5 sec.) intentions are known
(+7)	the opponent is "locked in" on John's sixth sense and he makes all further attempts at an additional -2.

Purchases and Equipment*

John has a harness which allows him to increase his density. Unfortunately, this harness interferes with his sixth sense – taking away his normal -2 advantage. Otherwise, the harness effects John as follows:

+40 Vigor	(2x normal)
+40 End	(2x normal)
+20 Stamina	(1x normal)

Squid

Champions

Characteristics:

15 STR	5		
20 DEX	30	13 P D	10
20 CON	20	11 E D	7
10 BOD	–	6 SPD	30
13 INT	3	7 REC	–
13 EGO	6	42 END	1
15 PRE	5	28 STN	–
10 COM	–		

Pts	*Powers*	*End*
20	(30) Multipower, OIF squid pendant	
4	(6) Darkness (impervious to X-ray at max)	6
4	(6) HTH Kill, 2d6 + ST bonus	3
10	Acrobatics	
15	Martial Arts	
15	Luck (3d6)	
5	Stealth	
10	Ultraviolet vision	

100+ Disadvantages:	*Pts*
Hunted by Razor 11-	25
Hunted by Florida supervillain group 11-	30
1½ STUN, energy attacks	15
Secret ID	15
Fear of fighting in bright light (common, irrational)	15

Villains & Vigilantes

Origin: Accidental Supernatural

Strength	11
Constitution	15
Intelligence	12
Dexterity	18
Charisma	9 (+1)
Level	5
Hit points	28
Power potential	56

Powers:
Darkness
Death touch
Magical device (lucky squid charm)

Superhero 2044

Type: Unique

Vigor	20
Stamina	30
Endurance	25
Mentality	21
Charisma	14
Ego	20
Dexterity	30

Powers & Equipment:
Darkness (acts as smoke bomb)
Sonar
Speargun (-2)

Razor

Champions

Characteristics:

25 STR	15		
20 DEX	30	10 P D	5
13 CON	6	9 E D	6
10 BOD	–	5 SPD	20
13 INT	3	10 REC	4
18 EGO	16	44 END	9
15 PRE	5	32 STN	2
10 COM	–		

Pts	*Powers*	*End*
45	(90) Multipower, OAF Knife	
6	(12) Flight to 30", Multi	6
1	(3) ¼ END, Flight, Ultra	1
6	(12) Invisibility, complete, Multi	12
1	(3) ¼ END, Invisibility, Ultra	3
6	(12) Density increase, 6 levels, Multi	12
1	(3) ¼ END, Density, Ultra	3
4	(8) HTH Kill, ½d6, OAF Knife; +1d6+1 from ST, + up to 1½d6 with density	var
9	+3 skill levels with HTH Kill	

100+ Disadvantages	*Pts*
Hunted by Squid, 11-	25
Hunted by NYC Superhero Group, 11-	30
Overconfidence	20
Public ID	10
1½ times BODY, physical killing attacks	15

Villains & Vigilantes

Origin: Mutant

Strength	15
Constitution	11
Intelligence	12
Dexterity	15
Charisma	13
Level	5
Hit points	27
Power potential	53

Powers:
Invisibility device
Flight (max. 60mph/-7 DEX)
Chemical change (when holding knife)
+30 STR
+22 CON
Heightened attack with knife

Superhero 2044

Type: Unique

Vigor	15
Stamina	25
Endurance	20
Mentality	21
Charisma	30
Ego	24
Dexterity	25

Powers & Equipment:
+15 STAM knife attack
Flight (acts as jet belt)
Invisibility (-5 END)
Body armor
+15 VIG
+20 END

Airhammer

Champions

Characteristics:

23 STR	13		
18 DEX	24	15 P D	10
15 CON	10	3 E D	–
16 BOD	12	4 SPD	12
8 INT	-2	10 REC	4
13 EGO	6	40 END	5
12 PRE	2	36 STN	–
8 COM	-1		

Pts	*Powers*
60	(90) Multipower IAF rings & belt
10	(12) Teleportation, 30" max, Multi
2	(3) ¼ END, Teleportation, Ultra
10	(12) Invisibility, complete, Multi
2	(3) ¼ END, Invisibility, Ultra
10	(12) Density Increase, 6 levels, Multi
2	(3) ¼ END, Density, Ultra
9	+3 skill levels, Punch

100+ Disadvantages:	*Pts*
Public ID	10
Fear of energy attacks (very common, irrational)	20
Anti-social, Mean (react as 14- Unusual Looks)	15
2 times STUN, energy attacks	30
2d6 Unluck	10
1½ times BODY, energy attacks	15

Villains & Vigilantes

Origin: Sponsored

Strength	15
Constitution	14
Intelligence	6
Dexterity	12
Charisma	8
Level	3
Hit points	18
Power potential	47

Powers:
Invisibility device
Teleportation device (max. 500 ft.)
Gravity control device (only affects wearer)
+30 STR
+30 CON
-1 DEX per +10 STR/CON

Superhero 2044

Type: Ubermensch

Vigor	50
Stamina	50
Endurance	50
Mentality	5
Charisma	10
Ego	10
Dexterity	25

Powers & Equipment:
+10 STAM class one attack
Jet belt
Body armor
+20 VIG
+20 END

METAL

by John Rankin

Editor's Note:

This is the first in a new column for TSG. It's not a picture-display miniatures review column; you can get that elsewhere. "Metal" will examine the miniatures industry as a whole – the companies, the people, the figures, the markets.

Columnist John Rankin is familiar with all the aspects of the industry. As president of T-Rex, he was involved in the creation of the licensed **FGU Ground and Air Equipment** *series, some of the sharpest future-armor yet marketed. As marketing director for Steve Jackson Games, he keeps his eye on the industry. A miniatures hobbyist since 1974, he's also familiar with the flip-side – the thoughts and preferences of the miniatures enthusiast.*

This is a departure for TSG, something of an experiment. Let us know what you think.

★★★

When the idea for this column first came up, I had to face the fact that miniatures-related articles traditionally do very poorly in TSG reader surveys. The reason for this, I hope, is that everyone's tired of beginner-level "how-to-paint" articles and shallow overviews of which company produces what figures. On the other hand, industry news is always near the top in reader interest. This seems to be a logical place to start; while I *will* review figures and offer painting tips, I'll try to keep them relevant. Your comments, questions, and criticisms are solicited – indeed, they will determine the direction and ultimate fate of this column.

Why It's Tough to Make a Buck

Games are published, miniatures are manufactured. Manufacturing *anything* is a pain, and miniatures present a whole set of unique problems.

Metal is *expensive*! A good tin/lead alloy (25% tin-75% lead is used at SJG) can run from $2.00-3.00 a pound. When you consider that a single figure may weigh in at an ounce, you're looking at 10-20 cents per figure in material costs. Not bad for a figure that sells for a dollar – right? Wrong. Keep in mind that the figure is sold by the manufacturer to the distributor for 40-45 cents.

Consider the cost of equipment (which can easily run into five figures), a place to put it, skilled labor for sculpting, mold-making and casting, packaging, mold rubber, shipping, administrative overhead, advertising . . . the slice of the pie we call "profit" has suddenly grown very small indeed.

In any sort of manufacturing, a profit margin of 10% is considered optimum; in reality, half of that or less is common. The figure you pay a dollar for in the store is earning the company that made it perhaps a penny or two, and from that must come the money to expand the business. You have to sell a *lot* of figures to stay afloat . . . and some companies do. Over the coming months, I'll examine the Big Guys in the industry; Ral Partha, Heritage, Grenadier, and Minifigs. All are successful; all have differing philosophies on how to make and market miniatures.

Ral Partha

A TSG article once referred to Ral Partha as the "Cadillacs" of miniatures. Rolls Royce is more like it. There are two important reasons for this.

The first is named Tom Meier. Not to slight Ral Partha's other fine sculptors, Dennis Mize and Julie Guthrie, but Tom is, quite simply, the finest sculptor of 25mm figures in the world today. The amount of detail he puts into a miniature would have been considered amazing for a 54mm figure only a few years ago. Mr. Meier's "Personalities" and "Collectors Series" have already won every award in the book. These lines are constantly being added to, and the older figures are frequently remade to reflect Tom's ever-increasing mastery of his art, an expensive process that most companies wouldn't even consider. They'd simply retire the line and do something new.

Ral Partha
5938 Carthage Ct.
Cincinnati, OH 45212

Founded: 1975 by Chuck Crain, Jack Hesselbrock, Glenn Kidd (president), Tom Meier, Marc Rubin, and Rich Smethurst.
Owned by: Above people in the form of Delgado North American Holding Co.
Employees: 28
Number of figures sold in 1981: over 4,000,000

The second reason for Ral Partha's success is quality control. Pouring molten lead into molds is hot, dirty work and it's often exceedingly difficult to motivate casters to properly check every single figure. Ral Partha figures are virtually flash-free and molded of high-quality metal. Of the hundreds I've bought over the years, I've never had a reject, and I am *very* demanding.

Are Ral Partha figures perfect? Not quite, but the reason may surprise you. It's called paintability. The extraordinary detail that makes these figures so outstanding also makes it hard to do justice to them with the old paintbrush. In fact, five-ought and ten-ought brushes are needed if you want to paint every detail. This is not to say a beginner shouldn't try his hand on them – if you paint for any length of time, you'll end up with them sooner or later. But there are much easier figures to paint.

Tip of the month – use black primer on these figures. That's right, black. Then paint them with a dry-brush technique (dip brush in full-strength paint, wipe most of it off on a rag, and lightly drag the brush across the surface of the figure). This sounds strange, but give it a try. With a little patience and practice, you'll be surprised at how well this technique works.

Next month – on "As the Mold Spins" . . .

Uncle Duke's run off with the mysterious "E." Cousin Howie's running the ranch . . . But will it soon be running him? Tune in for "Heritage – The Troubled Giant."

CATACOMBS OF CHAOS

You, Moraden, leader of a party of six brave adventurers, step through the north portal of your safe room. There is a blaze of shimmering light. The next instant you and your friends find yourself in another room. As your party enters this large, grim, dank catacomb, they see the north wall is made of moldy stone. There is a large iron statue with eyes made of red gems. Suddenly from behind the statue leaps an awful ghoul! As one, your group draws their swords to battle . . . for glory and riches in the CATACOMBS OF CHAOS.

CATACOMBS OF CHAOS is a fully computerized, fantasy adventure, correspondence game allowing for interaction between players and the magical fantasy realm of the catacombs. This adventure allows players one turn every two weeks with the game running until a predetermined number of turns has elapsed.

As a player you will have hundreds of unique, exciting rooms to explore. Each holds its own secrets and treasures; each with its own dangers. The mysterious catacombs are haunted by fearsome creatures of darkness sworn to defend the treasures at all cost. This is a world of magic and archaic weapons where only skill and cunning stand between you and a horrible fate!

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- There are well over 150 different rooms. Each is fully described in text with no codes to decipher to see the results of your turn.
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Send to: **Schubel & Son**
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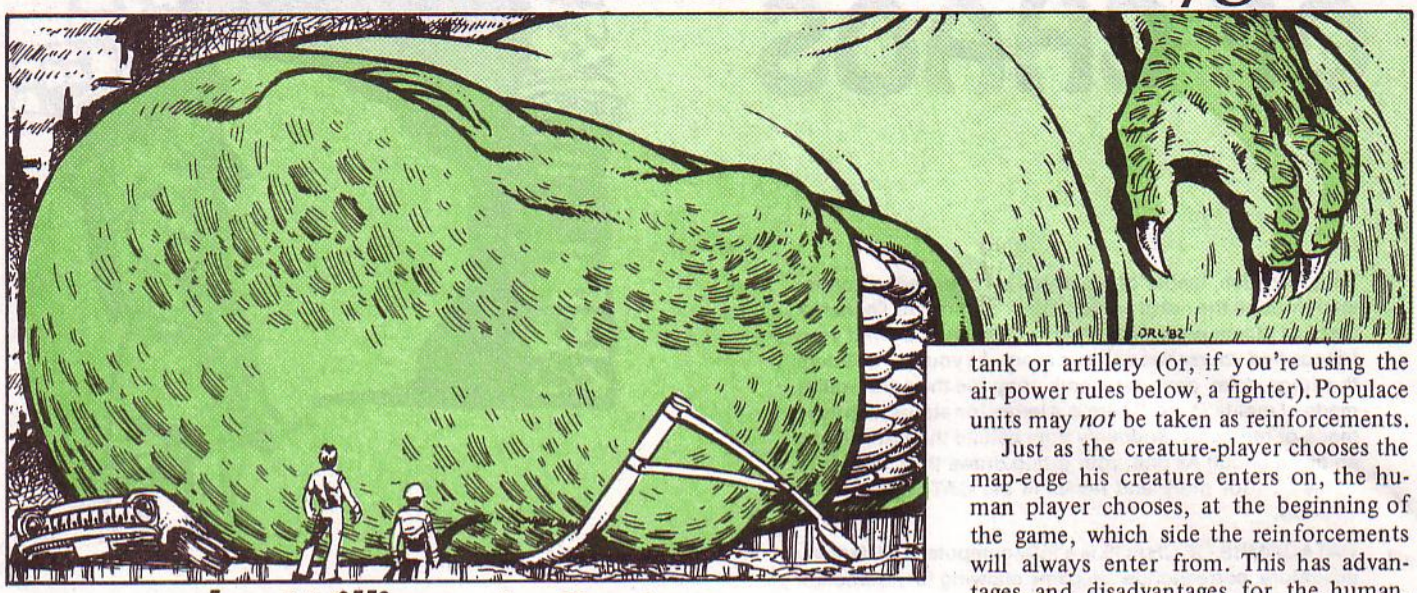
Giving the Humans an Even Break In The Creature That Ate Sheboygan



by William A. Barton

SPI's *The Creature That Ate Sheboygan* is one of the hobby's most enjoyable science fiction games. Who among us has never had the urge to tear down buildings, flatten tanks, and stomp police cars into cracks in the pavement? But what of the humans? In a two-player game such as CTAS, one hapless soul must actually try to stop the monster's destructive rampage.

Having played *Creature* for almost a year and a half, and having placed as Best Human Player in tournaments at Michi-Con and WinterCon 1980 (losing to the monster in the final round) and winning one at CWA Con (trouncing my opponents soundly as the creature), I have come to the conclusion that the humans need help in this game! Except in the learning and basic games (in which the monster doesn't have enough points to eat Sesame Street, much less Sheboygan), CTAS is definitely biased in favor of the creature. If the monster player distributes his strength points correctly and chooses the right special abilities (lightning throwing and fire breathing), it is next to impossible for the human player to win in a game between evenly-matched opponents.

Several adjustments may be made to prevent the game from degenerating into: "I'll be the creature this time so I can win; then you can be the creature and we'll be even." The number of victory points needed by the monster-player can be increased; the number of initial strength points the creature has can be lowered; or the creature can be limited in his choice of special abilities. However, modifications such as these eliminate some of the fun inherent in the game. Another option is to increase the potency of the human forces with additions to that side's bag of tricks. I've experimented with rules additions to give the human a better chance of stopping his Brobdingnagian opponent. Some of the more interesting of these follow.

Human Reinforcements

The human player may now receive reinforcements to bolster his defensive force. Beginning with the turn after that in which the first human combat unit (any unit other than a populace counter) is destroyed, the human player may receive *one* reinforcement unit *every alternate turn.* This represents units from nearby areas coming to the aid of the Sheboygan National Guard. To determine the type of unit received as a reinforcement, roll one die. On a roll of 1-4, any non-armor/heavy support unit may be taken as a reinforcement – infantry, police car or helicopter (or, if the creature is a fire-breather, a fireman or fireboat). On a roll of 5 or 6, an armor/heavy support unit may be taken as a reinforcement – tank or artillery (or, if you're using the air power rules below, a fighter). Populace units may *not* be taken as reinforcements.

Just as the creature-player chooses the map-edge his creature enters on, the human player chooses, at the beginning of the game, which side the reinforcements will always enter from. This has advantages and disadvantages for the human. After the first unit enters, the monster knows where they're coming from and can move away. But the human player can still reinforce through an area he most wants to protect.

Example: Turn one. Human player loses a helicopter to the monster. Turn two. There are two infantry units, three police units, and a helicopter in the mix of unused or destroyed unit counters. Human player rolls a 2. He may take one infantry, helicopter, or police unit. He chooses the helicopter. Turn three. No reinforcements. Turn four. Human player rolls a 6. There are no tanks or artillery in the mix; no reinforcement. Turn five. No reinforcement. Turn six. Human player rolls a 1. He may take an infantry unit or police unit, as these are the only ones in the mix.

Note that if human losses are kept to a minimum once reinforcements begin, the human player could, at some point, have more units on the map than he started with. Of course, a smart monster player will delay destroying the first human unit as long as possible to avoid facing reinforcements until he's well along in victory points. But the human player can always force the issue (suicide infantry!).

If players find the reinforcement schedule a case of "too little too late," reinforcements may be received every turn instead. The human player will still be limited to the forces found in the initial counter mix.

Increased Strength for Adjacent Units

Since the human player risks taking greater losses when he attacks the creature from an adjacent box than with ranged fire, play often tends toward a lot of long-range sniping – especially if the monster, too, has a ranged weapon. To alleviate this syndrome, ranged units which attack the creature from an adjacent box now receive an increase in offensive (but *not* defensive) firepower. Helicopters may add 1 to their offensive strength when attacking an adjacent monster; tanks and artillery add 2.

In conjunction with this rule, infantry may now attack from a range of 2 boxes, but with a total offensive strength of only 1. An infantry unit will still defend with its printed strength of 3 regardless of range.

Increased Firefighting Ability

It's almost an axiom that, if the creature is a fire-breather, Sheboygan is going to burn to the ground, despite the human player's best efforts. There simply aren't enough firefighting units to cover the whole board. To remedy this situation, add two extra firefighting units (human player's choice, firemen or fireboats) to the Sheboygan Fire Department.

If the reinforcements rule is being used, fire units may be taken as reinforcements on a roll of 1-4, provided there are available units in the mix.

Air Power

The Sheboygan National Guard may employ up to three jet fighters against the marauding creature. Fighters cost 8 points per unit. They attack and defend with a strength of 4 (their 20mm cannon) and may make *one* attack per mission at a strength of 8. This represents the planes' use of heavy ordnance (i.e., air-to-ground missiles). Any plane destroyed by the monster player is worth 4 victory points to him. Any plane that has used up its heavy ordnance in an attack may return to base and reload, alowing it another 8-point attack when it returns to play (see below for procedure). Aircraft move and attack in the appropriate human player's phases.

Aircraft Movement – Planes must be scrambled in order to enter the playing area. The human player must announce to the monster that he is scrambling his fighters. He does not need to reveal how many planes he has or how many he is scrambling at this time; however, any planes not scrambled initially will still have to be scrambled before they enter the game. Fighters may be scrambled during any Human Movement Phase after the monster has committed a destructive act (i.e., building destruction, setting a fire, or attacking a unit or populace counter). Two complete turns *after* scrambling, fighters may enter the map during the Human Movement Phase. Planes must enter from a predetermined direction (the airfield) which the human player must decide upon and write down before the monster enters the map. This direction must be revealed to the monster player one turn before planes enter, during the Human Movement Phase. Planes scrambled for the first time or planes returning from reloading at the airfield may enter the game from no other direction.

Planes move in a straight line across the map from the box in which they enter to the box in which they leave. Due to the irregular shapes of many of the boxes on the map, distances traveled will not always be uniform. Because of their high speeds, planes will only remain on the map for *two* turns. The first turn, they enter and move exactly halfway across the map (or as near as possible with the irregular boxes); the second, they move the remaining distance across and exit the map. Between turns – from one Human Movement Phase to the next – each aircraft on the map remains stationary, affecting no other unit on the map. After exiting, planes must spend two entire turns off the map. They may reenter during the third Human Movement Phase after leaving, returning from *any* direction *except* the one in which they previously entered the map. As in initial entry, the human player must note the direction from which he intends to bring on the planes for their second and subsequent flights. This must be done the same turn they exit the map and shown to the monster player one turn before the planes reenter.

Any time a plane exits the map in the direction of the airfield (the direction it entered from originally), it may spend five turns off the map in order to land and reload heavy ordnance – two turns to return to the airfield, one to reload, and two to return to the map (the plane does not have to be scrambled again to return). The returning plane is again capable of delivering one attack with a strength of 8.

Planes may enter the map and move in formation or stacked in a single box (there are no limits to stacking aircraft); or, they may enter singly, one after the other, during the Human Movement Phase. However, all planes scrambled in the same turn *must* enter and move during the same Human Movement Phase, ending their movement at the halfway mark across the map and moving in the same order the next turn. If the human player decides that the next strafing run will place his planes too close to the creature at the end of movement, he may "abort;" the planes stay off the map for two *more* turns, reentering from a different mapside.

Aircraft Combat – Planes *always* have line-of-sight to the monster; their LOS is unobstructed by either short or tall buildings, bridges, or other units. In order to hit the creature, a plane must pass within a certain number of boxes of it on the flight plan – four boxes for missiles, three for 20mm cannon.

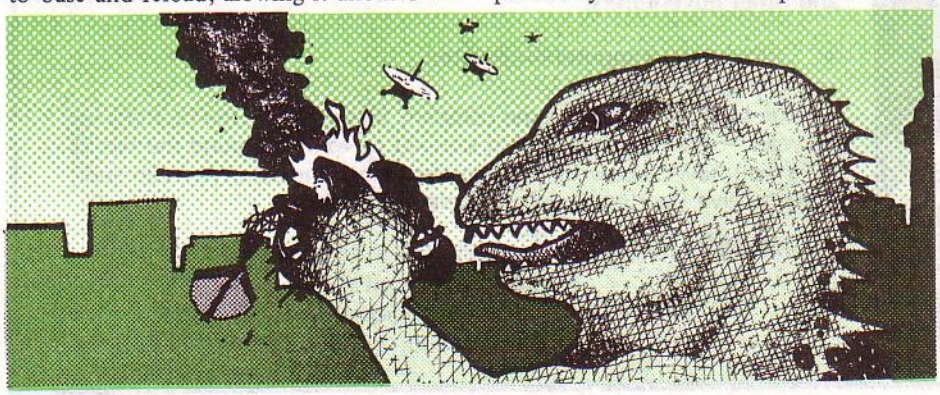
Planes may attack singly or in groups, adding their attack strengths together. Each plane may make more than one attack in any *one* turn in the course of the game – i.e., one missile attack and one cannon attack – provided they have heavy ordnance left. Missile and cannon fire may be added together into one attack strength.

If an attack by planes using missiles misses, the human player rolls 1 die. On a 1 or 2, every shot that missed impacts on city property somewhere off the map. Each such botched attack is worth 4 victory points to the monster.

While aircraft may add their attack strengths together, they may not combine with the attack strengths of ground forces – coordination is too difficult.

Aircraft may not carry laser cannons (explained later).

Monster Attacks – If, in the monster's movement phase, it can move adjacent to



the box a plane occupies – or three boxes away, for a lightning-thrower – it may attempt to attack the aircraft in its combat phase. If it's within range and has the attack strength to spend, it may attack several planes. These are resolved normally – the monster's attack strength vs. the plane's defense strength of 4. A monster may occupy the same box as a plane; the altitude differential is greater than with a helicopter.

If the human reinforcements rule is being used, a fighter may be chosen as a reinforcement on a roll of 6 rather than a tank or artillery unit, provided no more than three planes are ever in use (on or off the map) at one time.

Laser Cannon

For six initial strength points, the human player can designate any one tank or artillery unit as a laser-firing unit, automatically doubling its range and increasing its attack strength only by 4 points. Its defensive strength remains the same. Thus, a tank of attack/defense strength 6, range 2, becomes a laser tank of attack strength 10, defense strength 6, range 4. However, due to the weight of the weapon, the movement allowance of any laser-designated unit is reduced – a 2-point reduction for a tank and a 1-point reduction for an artillery unit. This means artillery units become virtually immobile, though with their doubled range (12 boxes) this is seldom a problem.

I've found each of these rules to add a certain flavor to the game. But giving all of these advantages to the human player at the same time would be disastrous to the monster; this reverses the imbalance problem instead of correcting it. For balance, try this: Give the humans increased firefighting ability automatically if the creature chooses firebreathing. The human player may choose two more of the five advantages (but we don't recommend he be allowed to choose both air power and reinforcements). He does not have to reveal to the monster player what they are until they begin to manifest themselves, though he should write them down beforehand along with the direction of the airfield, the direction the reinforcements enter from, etc.

And if you should suddenly find the human player winning most of your games and you start to feel a need for an even break for the monster player, I'll cover some new monsters and special abilities in a future Creature Feature that should set things right for the ol' nasties, too.

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Deus Ex Machina

More Computer As Familiar

by Bruce Webster

In issue 51, we discussed the general concept of the "computer as familiar," i.e., the computer serving as a "magical" assistant to gamemasters of role-playing games, much as familiars aided warlocks and witches of legend. The basic idea was that computers could be of help when doing what they do best: bookkeeping and calculations. This month, I would like to consider a specific case and see what would be involved in coming up with a game-aid program.

Defining the Scope

Let's say that I've bought SPI's ***Universe*** and want my computer to help me in my gamemaster tasks. The first thing I have to decide is just what my program will do for me. After becoming familiar with the game, I decide that what I want is a program which will do the following:

1) Maintain a list of all the stars on the interstellar display;
2) Help me to create solar systems when necessary;
3) Store basic information on each planet that I create (say, everything on the world log except for the map itself);
4) Allow me (and the players) to create, store, and update player and non-player characters;
5) Keep track of elapsed time during the actual game;
6) Check for and generate encounters;
7) Calculate awareness and initiative values for interactions.

Conspicuous by its absence is a routine for handling combat resolution. I have decided to leave that out because most RPG players like to roll their own dice. I can understand that – I like to roll my own dice, also. It makes me feel that I have a little more control over my destiny . . . sort of a "free will vs. determinism" situation.

The main goal of the routines is to save me time and paper in generating and accessing game information. I've avoided a lot of functions that I could have put in (such as combat). Even so, I've bitten off a lot. This familiar will require some rather sophisticated data structures for storing and retreiving world and character information. It will *not* be a "weekend special" but will require some time and thought.

Specification and Design

Having defined what the familiar is to do (the system requirements), I must now decide just how to implement it on my computer (the program specifications). I'm going to implement it on a 64K Apple II with two disk drives and an 80 by 24 upper/lower case display. All my programs will reside on one disk, while the data base will be on the other. I'm going to write the software in Pascal because of its excellent data structure and I/O capabilities, and because it's a far better language for complex software development than Applesoft, Integer Basic, or 6502 assembly language. My familiar will be a set of "menu-driven" programs, which means that at any point I will have a selection of several functions from which I can choose (including functions which will take me to new menus or exit me back to old ones).

Having made the above decisions (and many others), I now turn to the actual program design. The very first thing that I will do is to *define the output.* I'll say that again: *define the output.* One more time: *define the output.* What does this mean? It means that I sit down with paper and pencil and lay out all of the screen displays and printouts that my familiar will produce. *All* of them. Why? Because my output will define all of the data that I will need to have handy, and that in turn will define all my different inputs. In other words, my output determines my whole system. Anyway, I design my printouts for system, world, and character descriptions. I lay out the screen displays of the same information (for during play). I plan the main game display with all the necessary values showing. And I come up with the different menus and prompts I will need.

The output definition is followed by the data base design (doesn't have to be – that's just how I like to do it). The familiar will have four major files: a system file (system log info for all of the stars on the interstellar display), a world file (world log info), a character file (info on both player and non-player characters) and a game-state file (wherein to save information about a game in progress: time, current location, et cetera). Some minor files contain table and chart data to be read in for program use. Data structures are defined for these files. With Pascal, I can define a data structure to contain all of the information (and there's a lot) for a given character, and the program can read or write that entire structure from or to a file with a single statement.

With that information, I design the routines to input and manipulate all that information. The character generation routine will require that I answer various questions at different points and see what capabilities and experience have accumulated so far. Other routines will require similar interaction, and I will design a number of input handling routines that can be used throughout the program.

The design process is not as neat and linear as it appears above. As I work on different sections, I will discover new features that I want to include or current features that I want to eliminate or change. This will force me to cycle back through the output/data base/process/ input design sections. In a very real sense, I will not know for sure just what I want until I try to design and write it.

Coding and Testing

My approach to implementation is to first write all of the little utilities that I will use in various places throughout the familiar. These include routines to format the screen, to prompt for values, and special routines (such as random number generation). The prompting routines write out a prompt string, read in a value, and ensure that the value is within the correct limits. They also handle any errors during input (entering a letter for a number, etc.). This helps to make the program "bulletproof" (hard to crash), since the subroutine will not be exited until a valid value has been entered.

Having created a standard set of utilities, I now tackle the functions described above (world generation, etc.) one by one. I would start by writing a program that calls subroutines to perform each action desired. For example, a program to create a solar system might look like this:

```
PROGRAM system_generation;
  .
  .
  .
BEGIN
  choose_star;
  find_number_of_planets(num_planets);
  print_system_info;
  FOR planet := 1 TO num_planets DO BEGIN
    find_world_size_and_type;
    find_num_of_moons(num_moons);
    FOR moon := 1 TO num_moons DO BEGIN
      find_moon_type;
      find_moon_size
    END;
    find_world_gravity;
    find_world_atmosphere;
    find_world_temperature;
    find_world_hydrography;
    distribute_environs(num_environs);
    FOR environ := 1 TO num_environs DO
      find_environ_type;
    find_world_day_length;
    find_world_settlement;
    find_world_population;
    find_law_level;
    find_starport_class;
    find_civ_level;
    distribute_resources;
    distribute_population;
    print_world_info
  END
END.
```

(Note to Pascal enthusiasts: Excuse the lack of more explicit data structures, but I want this example to be as clear as possible.)

Having written the main body of the program above, I would then create "dummy" or "stub" versions of each of the 22 procedures called therein. For example:

```
PROCEDURE choose_star;
BEGIN
  (* dummy procedure – will pick star from  *)
  (* interstellar display                   *)
END; (* of PROC choose_star *)
```

Having defined all of the procedures (as well as the global variables, data structures, and utility procedures), I can now compile the program to make sure that everything defined so far is correct. Of course, this program won't do anything yet, but it won't bomb, either.

The next step is to repeat the process for each of the procedures above, starting with "choose_star." For example:

```
PROCEDURE choose_star;
BEGIN
  REPEAT
    get_string('Enter star name:  ',star)
  UNTIL on_display(star) AND not_used(star);
  get_star_info(star,coordinates,type)
END: (* of PROC choose_star *)
```

This procedure prompts the user to enter in the name of a star. It continues to prompt until the user enters a star that is on the interstellar display and that has not been previously defined. It then looks up the coordinate and star type information out of a table somewhere. The procedure "get_string" has already been defined (it's one of the utility procedures), but "on_display," "not_used," and "get_star_info" need to be created as (you guessed it) dummy procedures. For example:

```
FUNCTION on_display(star: string) : boolean;
BEGIN
  (* dummy function – will check to see if    *)
  (* "star" is on interstellar display        *)
  (* for now, always returns "true"           *)
  on_display := true
END; (* of FUNC on_display *)
```

As you might guess, the next step is to write the boolean function "on_display." Here's one possible version:

```
FUNCTION on_display(star: string) : boolean;
VAR
  found :  boolean;
  indx  :  integer;
BEGIN
  found := false;
  indx := 1;
  WHILE NOT found AND (indx <= num_stars) DO
    IF star = star_list[indx] (* star names *)
      THEN found := true
      ELSE indx  := indx + 1;
  on_display := found
END; (* of FUNC on_display *)
```

Good news: This function doesn't call any other procedures, so I'm done with it. I now have to write "not_used" and "get_star_info"; when I've done that, I'm finished with "choose_star" and can go on to "find_number_of_planets" and repeat the same process. Eventually, I will have written the entire program, one procedure at a time.

There are some definite advantages to this approach. First, at any given point, I am working on only one procedure, so it is easy to pinpoint errors. Second, I have a working program at all times (with, of course, the possible exception of the procedure I am currently working on), so I can start using it as soon as it does enough to be useful. Finally, I am able to write a very large program by breaking it into small, manageable portions.

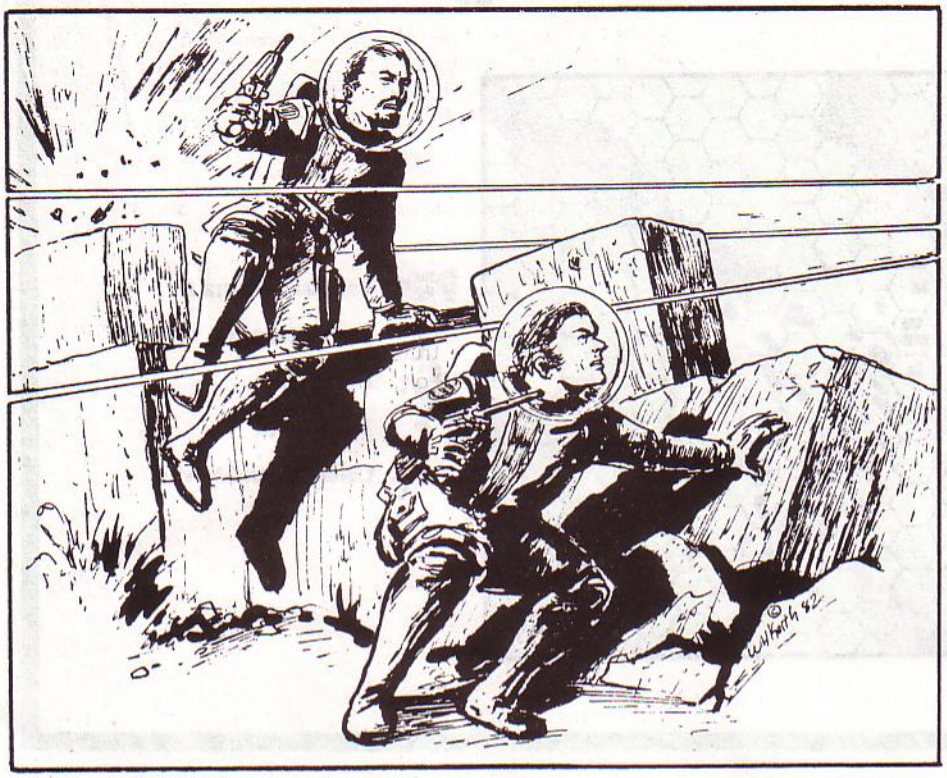
Conclusion

I've tried to make two points in this article: First, writing a gamemaster's familiar can quickly become an unmanageable project; second, you can manage it anyway if you use effective design and development techniques. I hope that this article has helped those of you who are writing (or are considering writing) your own familiars, and I would be very interested in hearing about your successes, attempts, and failures. Write to me c/o *The Space Gamer.*

(A last note: My use of ***Universe*** for my examples is not to be taken as an endorsement for the same. In fact, I was rather disappointed with it, but that's another story.)

THE NEWCOMERS

by J. Andrew Keith



In "Periastron" (April, 1982), the team of trade pioneers aboard the Far Trader **Scotian Huntress** *was forced by events to seek help from the enigmatic natives of the planet Storm, a dangerous, inhospitable world on which the* **Huntress** *had crashed. Fighting the elements and bands of hostile savages, the adventurers ultimately took refuge in an underground complex built by the civilization they sought.*

Outside, Storm's violent summer continues unabated. But though it is now over 50°C outside, inside the complex the temperature remains at a cool 10° or less. Thus the adventurers no longer need worry about straining their overworked environmental gear in the grueling heat of the planet's periastron passage. Repairs to the **Scotian Huntress** *have been delayed by the conditions outside, but can be resumed at leisure. In the meantime, the trade team has settled down to the job it came to do in the first place – opening up full commercial relations with the natives.*

After several days of intensive effort with computer language translators and similar learning aids, communications with Storm's inhabitants began to open up. They are flat, disc-like beings .5 meters tall but nearly 1.5 meters in diameter. They have achieved a fairly sophisticated Tech Level 8 civilization . . . though it is radically unlike those of the mainstream cultures the **Scotian Huntress** *crew is familiar with. Computers and other microelectronics systems are unknown; even communications technology is far below par, a result of high interference generated by the active star the world circles. But all in all, there are many points of contact between the two cultures, and it is plain to all that the H'Oskhikhil (as they call themselves) seem quite likely to be excellent partners for the team's employers, Caledon Ventures, in future mercantile relations.*

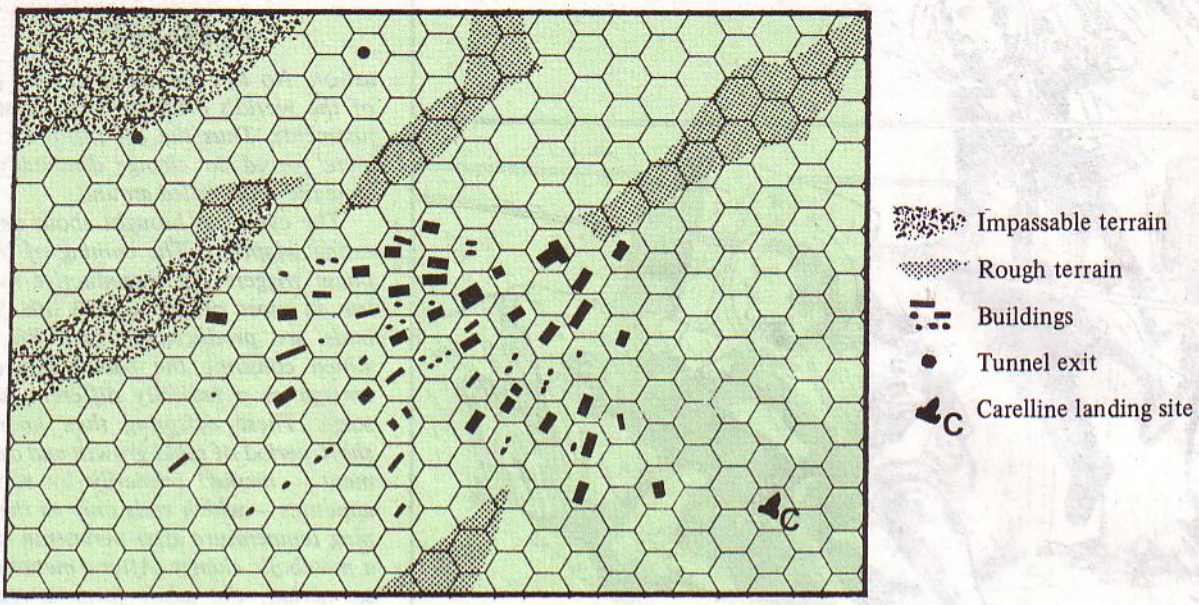
The scientists with the team have taken the opportunity to learn a great deal about the life cycle of Storm's inhabitants. With a hot, young star and a wildly eccentric orbit, Storm spends a period of over five hundred years in the cold phase of its long journey in orbit. Conditions are reasonably stable, but bitterly cold; only an unusual amount of vulcanism and internal heat keep the temperature warm enough to sustain water-based life, and that only for forms which can adapt readily to underground life for the period of apiastron. At the end of this period, though, comes the short but incredibly violent "summer," when the world passes close to the star and suffers from the massive environmental upheavals of periastron. No life can adapt to both phases of the world's orbit without massive adjustments. Thus the life forms on Storm were forced to change drastically each time the cycle rolled around.

The cycle has brought about an interesting adaption. The coming of the hot phase triggers the reproductive mechanism in most of the world's life. Several buds are produced in each life form, which consume the parent animal and emerge as a radically different juvenile stage. These offspring then undergo a short period of rapid growth and development – marked primarily by voracious appetites – which ends only as the dropping temperature after periastron triggers a metabolic change. After a metamorphosis period, the adult form is ready to emerge into the cooling world. This life cycle gives rise to great longevity, one of the main attributes of Storm's varied animal life.

Conditions on Storm hampered the development of civilization there, but several factors overcame the influences against it. First, the long lifespans of the H'Oskhikhil and their generally superior intelligence have made each generation capable of quick development and growth. More importantly, though, was the race's discovery of its own cyclic nature. A few individuals could survive periastron by living in cool polar caves, for example, though survival was a hit or miss affair. Eventually, it became possible to transmit knowledge accumulated by one generation to the emerging population of the next one. Gradually, the H'Oskhikhil learned to build places of refuge that could survive from one generation to the next. A few of the most intelligent of the race, together with records of civilization and knowledge, could thus be guaranteed the chance to help the next generation start ahead of the last one.

Long-lived, extremely intelligent, and dedicated to peace and learning, the inhabitants of Storm seem the ideal find for the trade team. But the coming of humans to Storm proves a mixed blessing; the natives are soon given reasons for regretting their hospitality. When this happens, the trade team finds that it stands to lose more than just a new market and a commission check . . .

Carelline Landing Site



This folio adventure is designed for characters of almost any background attached to the Trade Pioneer Team aboard the Type A2 Far Trader *Scotian Huntress.* The referee may draw characters from any source desired, including existing campaigns. It is urged that characters have some skill in ground combat.

No specific ***Traveller*** books, adventures, or supplements are required to play this adventure; the basic ***Traveller*** set (books 1, 2, and 3) is sufficient. However, almost any of the additional materials available for use with ***Traveller*** can be of value in enhancing the enjoyment of this situation. For example, deck plans of several ships that appear in this adventure can be obtained from GDW's Supplement 7, ***Traders and Gunboats.***

Background: For the trade team stranded on Storm, the passing of weeks has gone almost unnoticed, lost in the intense excitement and hard work of cementing relations with the natives within the enormous refrigerated complex known to the travellers as "the Citadel." The H'Oskhikhil have been thoroughly introduced to the concepts of computer technology, and are most interested. Blessed with an innate ability to do very rapid mental calculations, the race has never been pressed to develop the basic computer technology usually needed for a civilization like theirs; "organic computers" were the rule instead. Now, however, the *Scotian Huntress* party has been able to show the many advantages of using computers – not only in their functions as sophisticated calculators, but as devices which can regulate equipment, store information, and otherwise improve the basic abilities of the H'Oskhikhil calculators. Dealings had, in fact, progressed to the point where trade – computer components and software exchanged for the radioactive elements so common on Storm – was ready to begin in earnest.

Then came a crisis.

A new market can't be concealed forever. Though knowledge of Storm had been carefully shrouded before the beginning of the voyage of the *Scotian Huntress*, the facts were bound to leak out eventually. And representatives of other firms were bound to turn up sooner or later, to challenge the Caledon monopoly.

Unfortunately, the firm that came to Storm after the *Scotian Huntress* consisted of employees of Carillines, Ltd. Carillines was ruthless, aggressive, and well-known for its determination to turn a profit, no matter what it cost others. Sometimes little better than legalized pirates, the Carillines thrived in the loose political structure of Reavers Deep. And they found Storm, arriving while the Caledon team was still engaged in negotiations.

Linked by land-line communications, the population at the Citadel received reports from other refuges near other cities on Storm. When the Carillines ship landed near a city 200 km northwest of the Citadel, new reports began to come in on the activities of the newcomers. The new arrivals spread out to explore the ruins of the city; they plainly became convinced that conditions were ripe, in the wake of a catastrophe, to pick up loot and plunder indiscriminately. Their ruthlessness made the depradations of the juvenile H'Oskhikhil look harmless by comparison. When juveniles appeared, they were slaughtered without mercy, and pursued when driven off. It seemed that the leader of the Carillines expedition believed that no civilization remained to trade with. So no efforts were made to study the world, the artifacts which were found, or the native life. Instead, looting and destruction seemed the main task of the entire group of Carillines crewmen.

For a time, the actions of the newcomers could be looked upon as unfortunate, but not really harmful. But when the decided to investigate the local refuge, the

plunderers went too far. No entrance was obvious; therefore, they made their own with lasers mounted aboard a launch. The result was a disaster. Many adult H'Oskhikhil perished in the initial invasion, while the rest were doomed by the destruction of the refrigeration units that kept them from suffering the reproduction cycle. Through it all, the humans acted without thought, without apparent understanding of the situation. When the refuge was attacked, the transmissions quit. But everyone in the Citadel knew well enough what had happened. And many couldn't help but become suspicious of the humans they had welcomed into their own midst.

Opinion was split within the Citadel. Many H'Oskhikhil were convinced that the humans from the *Scotian Huntress* were friends. These individuals gave the team a warning of what could come of the crisis . . . and a way to avert it. It was quite possible that the humans would be expelled, or worse, killed out of hand – as a safeguard, or in reprisal – unless dramatic proof were offered of the humans' good intentions and their lack of connection with the newcomers. If, for instance, the Carillines crew were subdued . . .

So, thanks to the thoughtlessness of other humans, the *Scotian Huntress* trade team was caught in an unusual dilemma. Without proof of their goodwill – proof that could only come from an attack on the larger, better-armed party from Carillines – they were in great danger. They could lose the friendship of a freshly contacted race . . . the new market opened after such hardship and difficulty . . . and, indeed, their very lives.

Referee's Notes

Resources: The referee may designate the contents of the ship's locker from the *Scotian Huntress* on hand at the Citadel (in an ongoing campaign, this may already be known). Equipment and weaponry should be limited somewhat, and depend largely on the referee's judgement of the best balance to strike between the difficulty of the situation and the size and abilities of the group. All characters should be armed, though the quality of weapons or the quantity of ammunition may be curtailed somewhat to keep the group from indulging in indiscriminate attacks.

Transport to the area in which the Carillines ship has landed is limited. The *Scotian Huntress* can fly, but has limited endurance due to breakdowns (still under repair) in the life support systems. The ship's air/raft has been cannibalized for parts; if it is still flying at all, it is very much restricted. The H'Oskhikhil have remote-controlled air/rafts (see "Periastron"), but these are limited in range by the poor quality of radio signals in the presence of the energetic star . . . and by the fierce storms that can ground or destroy grav vehicles during the summer season. The same storms make it impractical to handle native air/rafts directly, though a character with grav vehicle-4 can pilot such an alien vehicle as if his skill were grav vehicle-1.

The best means of trasportation available is an underground transportation system which connects the refuges with one another. A ground car can carry the party to a point near the destroyed refuge, where a break in the tunnel (made during the attack) disrupts further movement. Either of the two tunnel exits shown on the map may be used by the party upon their arrival at the new city.

The Carillines Party: The opposition is divided into two groups. the smaller of these is on board the main Carillines ship, a 400 ton "far trader" (the sibsidized merchant vesses is described in ***Traveller*** Book 2). This party consists of four individuals, who will be found either aboard or in the immediate vicinity of the ship. If an alarm is given as a result of the player-character actions or attacks, the ship party will withdraw to the defense of its vessel. It is very unlikely that the adventurers will be able to gain access to the ship with weapons normally available, once the alarm is given. The ship is armed, carrying two dual laser turrets plus sandcasters. The site of the merchant ship is marked on the map; if the ship lifts off, the referee should keep track of any movements it may make.

The larger party crews the launch, an armed auxiliary equipped with a beam laser. The party contains eight people, who may be on board or operating on the ground nearby. The referee may secretly choose a location for the launch at the

Event Table

Roll two dice once each half-hour:

2 *Lightning:* Fierce flashes of lightning begin. A character caught in the open must roll his dexterity or less to take cover. Failure to make the throw results in 8d damage. No ships may fly during a lightning storm.
3 *Natives:* See *Natives* rule.
4 *No event*
5 *Storm:* Visibility drops to medium range. All stats of individuals caught in the open are reduced to one-half original values. They remain this way as long as the character is in the open. Lightning will hit exposed individuals on a roll of 10+, made once per five minutes. Effects are as in 2, above. The storm lasts for 5d minutes.
6 *Natives*
7 *Storm*
8 *No event*
9 *Natives*
10 *Natives*
11 *Natives*
12 *Carillines launch:* The armed launch appears overhead, hovering above the location of one or more player characters. It remains overhead for 2d minutes, before flying off to a destination of the referee's (secret) choice. During the time it is overhead, characters will be spotted any time they move, or on a roll of 10+ made once per minute. The Carillines people, who have been troubled by juveniles, will tend to sweep areas where they spot intruders with laser fire. A hit by laser fire is made on a roll of 9+, and is treated as lightning (see 2, above) if it is made.

adventure's start; it may, however, move from this location as a result of event table directions.

Both groups should be armed and equipped as the referee sees fit; on the whole, they will be better outfitted than the Caledon team. Exact equipment should be selected by the referee for maximum balance and playability.

Conditions: The unpleasantly high temperatures and the ozone content of Storm's summertime atmosphere make vacc suits an absolute necessity for humans travelling outside. Violent storms and other natural hazards will be a great danger for adventurers and their opponents; the event table regulates the occurrance of these. The referee should feel free, however, to add further dangers to overcome. On Storm, the elements are the single worst danger to unwary adventurers.

Natives: Native encounters are governed by the event table. Natives are hot-phase juveniles, tall, tubular, with four arms, four legs, and large appetites. They generally carry torches, clubs, spears, and other makeshift, primitive weapons and tools. A total of 1d x 10 may be encountered at any one time. They always attack when encountered, and make to distinction between one side or another. A native attack breaks off when half or more are killed from the ranks of any given group. If a human is captured or killed, he will be eaten as soon as possible. Stats for the natives, for those who have not been following this sequence of adventures are: Weight – 100 kg. Hits – 20/9. Armor – none. Wounds & weapons – by weapon type (club, crude spear, or rock). A0F052.

The Adventure: The players must attempt to overcome both groups of Carillines crewmen. The exact course of their attack will, of course, depend on the strategy and tactics they choose to adopt. In general, taking the 400-ton trader ensures that none can escape . . . but the trader may prove almost impossible to take without capturing the laser mounted on board the launch.

By and large, the best possible result from the players' point of view is one which ends in the capture of the senior Carillines people, rather than in outright slaughter of all involved. If the enemy leaders are captured, they can be brought before the H'Oskhikhil in demonstration of the team's support for its new friends. Also, if all the opposition is killed or merely driven off, the H'Oskhikhil may not believe they were enemies of Caledon's people at all, but may suspect collusion of some sort.

Resolution: Final negotiations depend upon the skill of the adventurers, the success of the attack, and similar factors. The referee should roll on the Reaction Table (Book 3). The following DMs apply: If Carillines people were taken captive, DM+3. If the Carillines ship escapes, DM-2. Appropriate skills can also favorably modify the result.

A result of 10+ indicates an overwhelmingly successful voyage, and will result in the award of a special bonus (discussed below) to the group. Results of 8-10 are successful, and provide standard commissions for the team. A result of 5-7 results in a breakdown of negotiations, with no bonus becoming available to the party despite its efforts. A result of less than 5 causes a complete rejection of the humans; referees who so desire may choose to set further adventures around attempts to escape from this disaster.

For successful completion of the mission, the party receives a commission, amounting to Cr500,000 for each member. If a special bonus is awarded as discussed above, the commission is raised to Cr750,000 apiece. The referee should feel free to increase or decrease these amounts as appropriate to his campaign.

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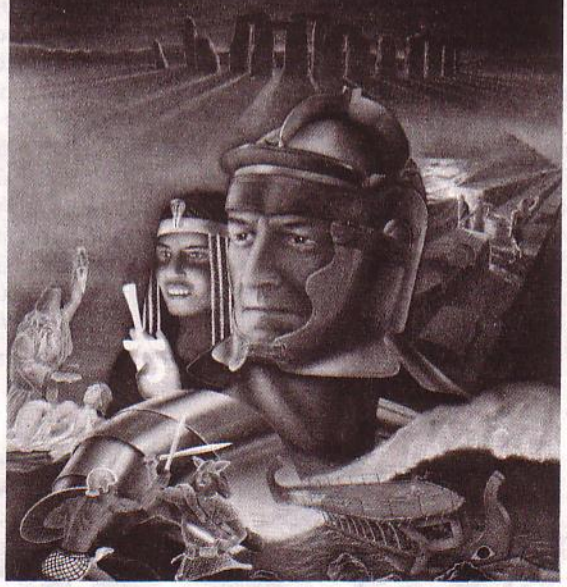

It is summer, 41 A.D. Your journey has been long and arduous but at last you and the rest of your party camp within the great stone ring of Salisbury plain and spend an anxious night waiting for the golden glow of the midsummer day's dawn. Your thought's are not of the mad emperor, Caligula, who sent you on this maniacal quest, nor do they dwell upon the evil clans of Black Druids who stood between you and this night; but rather of the unknown, mystical dangers that lurk within these very stone megaliths, dangers and powers that will be unleashed as sure as the sun will rise. Obsessed with this premonition of danger you have not the slightest inkling that when that same sun rises you will be irresistibly pulled into a series of events of such magnitude that they not only dwarf Caligula and Rome itself; but form the greatest adventure in human history. You have not the slightest suspicion that tomorrow's dawn will throw you into danger and intrigue that will lead you to discover . . . **The riddle of Stonehenge! . . . The secrets of the pyramids! . . . The mysteries of the ancient world!** as you play **Man, Myth & Magic.**

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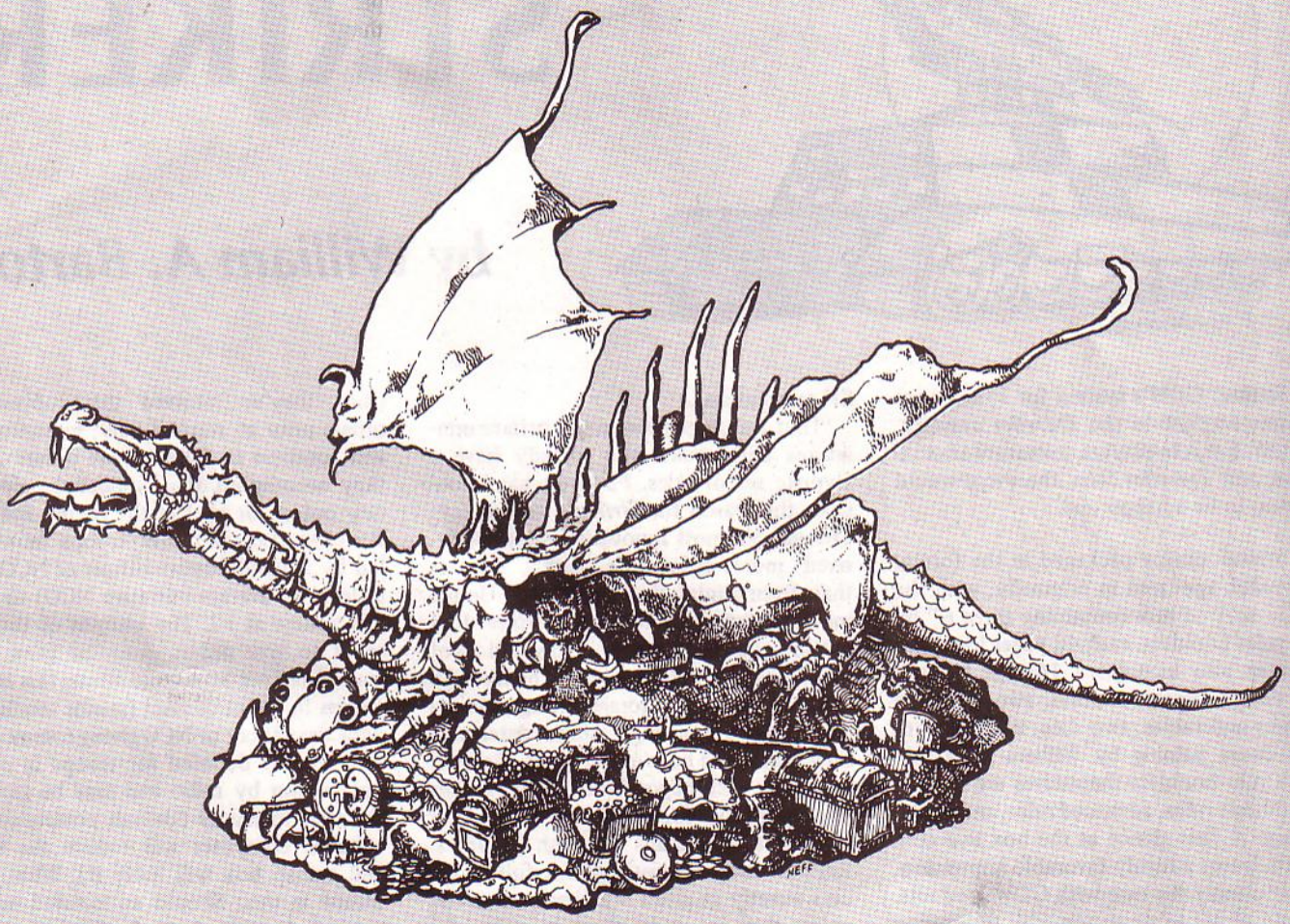

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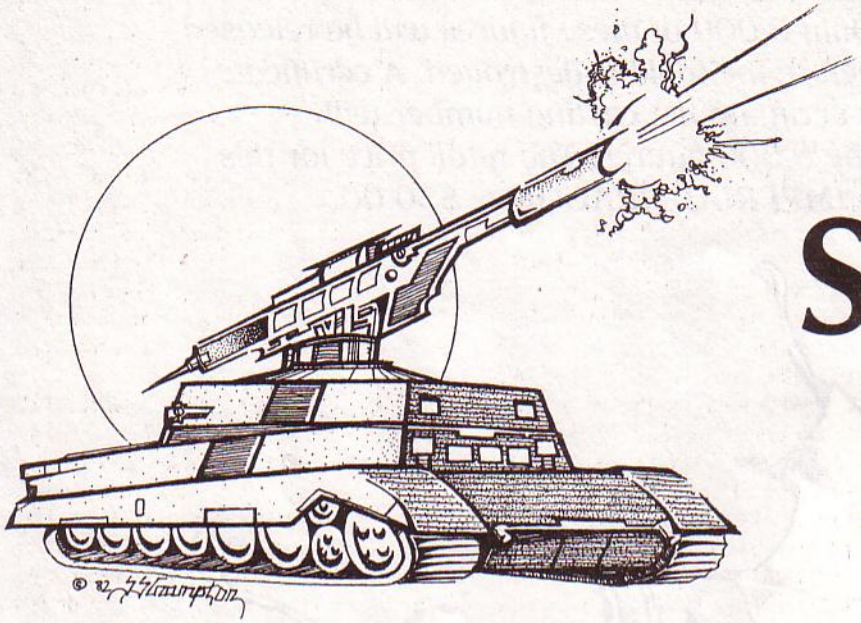


STRIKER

by William A. Barton

Striker, GDW's system for 15mm miniatures conflict in the *Traveller* universe, is here. For role-players, miniature aficionados, and *Traveller* fans, the event would appear to be a happy one.

Striker comes packaged in the format *Traveller* appeared in originally, with the same sort of box containing three 6" by 9" rules booklets, each 48 pages long. But *Striker* also includes a 16-page booklet of design sequence tables, two sheets of charts and tables, two dice, and a beautiful cover paining by William H. Keith. The rule booklets themselves are divided into basic rules, advanced rules, and equipment. A first glance at the box and contents leaves a highly favorable impression, as is usually the case with GDW products. Upon closer examination, this impression is reinforced, page by page and rule by rule . . .

Striker is an impressive piece of work. It covers just about every aspect of small-scale warfare one can imagine, from tech levels 5 (World War I) to 15 (*Traveller*'s Imperium, some 3,500 years in the future), with only minor omissions. There are more rules crammed into that little box than in any set of SF miniature rules with which I'm familiar. And *Striker* provides what is probably a closer simulation of real-life combat situations than *any* miniature rules set currently on the market, SF or otherwise.

That last statement might irritate miniatures enthusiasts who already have a favorite set of rules. I'll give what I consider the reason for *Striker*'s superiority: The game's most innovative rules are derived more from role-playing systems than from miniatures conventions. Unlike most miniatures rules sets, *Striker* does not allow a player to move any and all of his forces in whatever manner he likes. In addition to their morale ratings, troops have initiative ratings which determine how much and how many types of action they may take beyond direct orders. This rates from low for recruits to average for regulars and veterans and high for elites. Recruits may do nothing but follow orders exactly as given – and even then not unless they are under the leadership of a higher-initiative NCO or officer. On the other end of the scale, elites may improvise fairly extensively outside their orders if the situation warrants it. Translated into role-playing terms, the elites and (to some extent) the veterans represent player-characters, while the regulars and recruits become similar to NPCs who do not always behave exactly as the player-characters might wish.

To further place the player in the "role" of the commander of a small unit of troops, *Striker* utilizes highly innovative rules for command and communications. Once they've received their operating orders prior to start of play, most troops will continue to follow those orders until they accomplish their objective, receive new orders, or contact the enemy and are fired on. Low-initiative troops must be led by a high-initiative officer or NCO (or at least an average-initiative NCO) to follow orders at all. The amount of time it takes to give orders once the game has started is four 30-second turns; this is for troops in direct contact (stands touching) with the officer or NCO giving commands. The time is doubled for troops in communication by radio and may be greater in other instances (though possession of a battle computer will reduce the time and a map box will halve it). What this means is this: Should an isolated squad get into trouble, instead of a player immediately being able to move other forces to assist, the entire skirmish could be over before communications could be established with another unit and orders given to send assistance to the besieged unit. This might seem disconcerting to the miniatures player who is accustomed to the "omniscient I" approach. Yet it is much more realistic than most systems, giving the player a greater appreciation of the problems a unit leader must face in combat. Role-players, used to the inconsistent actions of obstinate NPCs, should have less trouble adjusting to the concept.

Some will note similarities between the leadership systems of ***Striker*** and those of certain boardgames such as ***Squad Leader.*** Indeed, there are some parallels. However, the overall scope of ***Striker*** is much greater than in most such games. Historical gamers who tend toward miniatures should find much of interest in ***Striker,*** provided they'll look beyond the ***Traveller*** "SF" label; nearly any non-naval historical action from WWI through modern times may be simulated using the game's systems. (***Striker*** could be a good ploy to introduce your historical gamer friends to SF – and vice versa.) The influence of GDW's own ***TacForce*** modern miniature rules can be seen in ***Striker,*** too.

In fact, to give justice to the plethora of material contaned in ***Striker*** would take much more space than is available for this review. To summarize: Book 1, *Basic Rules,* covers in three sections the bare necessities needed to play. "Preliminaries" outlines the game scale (1mm = 1m) and Terran environment of the basic rules, tells the role of the referee, and covers force composition and organization, morale, and initiative, and how to create unit cards. "Playing the Game" provides the turn sequence, the command, communication, and morale effect rules, and movement, visibility, and spotting rules. "Fire Combat" covers the mechanics of direct and indirect fire for infantry units, vehicles, and artillery, including special rules for grenades, tac missiles, and lasers, and notes how to determine and administer wounds, vehicle, weapon, and structure damage, and the effects of combustion and smoke.

Book 2, *Advanced Rules,* breaks down into four sections: "Advanced Rules," "Optional Rules," "Campaign Rules," and "Integration with ***Traveller.***" The first section adds such exotica as meson accelerators, MRLs, point defense, drones, nukes, electronic detection, ammo use, encumbrance, weather effects, night and non-Terran planetary environments, engineering rules, and rules for explosives and other important factors. Optional rules cover melee, chemical warfare, and the use of aircraft (either in ground support or dogfighting), while the campaign rules allow continuing conflicts with guidelines for treating the wounded, combat repairs, experience, and budgets. The final section of Book 2 explains how to integrate ***Striker***'s combat systems with ***Traveller***'s role-playing and its universe. It covers the initiative and morale differences of the major races of ***Traveller,*** including info on Zhodani psionics and K'kree claustrophobia, how to determine military budgets for the worlds of the Imperium, conversions from ***Striker*** armor and weapons to ***High Guard*** for orbital bombardment by starships, and the philosophy behind the Imperial Rules of War for those wishing to stage conflicts within the Imperium.

Book 3, *Equipment,* is just that – lists and lists and *lists* of weapons and equipment, along with design sequences for vehicles, weapons, aircraft, and helicopters. Four sample vehicles help the novice wade through the mounds of material on design.

Aside from the massive amount of material contained therein and the realism of command and communications rules, what else about ***Striker*** makes it worth purchasing? Again, there just isn't room to list all of the game's good points. One that deserves mention is the combat system. Rather than the regular ***Traveller/ Mercenary*** system, ***Striker*** utilizes the cleaner, more realistic ***Azhanti High Lightning*** combat, extended to cover blade and melee weapons, heavy support and artillery weapons, explosives, and all the other aspects of combat. Players who have been annoyed by the armor-as-a-DM-to-hit syndrome of ***Traveller*** can breathe a sigh of relief: Here, armor makes no difference on whether you get hit or not; it may keep the hit from penetrating, or at least will reduce its effects. Armor and weapons have been further broken down into tech level differences; battledress and combat armor of higher TLs give more protection than those of lower TLs; lasers become more powerful at TL 13+, etc.

The less-than-satisfying melee system of AHL has been replaced with one using all the blade, brawling, and natural weapons of ***Traveller,*** plus a few more. New weapons have been added, from WWI bolt-action rifles to magnum revolvers to laser and gauss pistols, though the off-the-shelf ***Traveller*** autocannon is missing, replaced by rules for designing autocannons. Information on how many dice damage each category of wound is also included.

Other high points include integrating coherent rules for vehicles into ***Traveller,*** a boon to every ref who's ever had to improvise such information on the spur of the moment. The explosives rules include details on the nature and use of TDX. The vehicle and explosives rules alone should save referees enough time to make the purchase of ***Striker*** worthwhile.

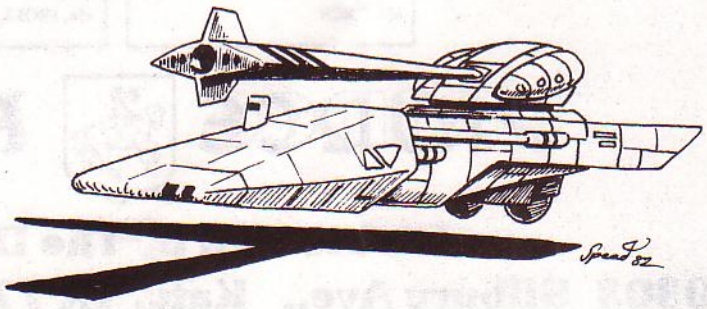
Another selling point is the vast variety of vehicles and weapons that can be designed. Some examples of vehicles have already appeared in FASA's ***Uragyad'n of the Seven Pillars*** and GDW's ***Broadsword.*** Virtually any tank, truck, car, jeep, weapons carrier, APC, etc., can be designed with these rules.

While ***Striker*** is a major addition to both the ***Traveller*** and miniatures markets, there are some problems. Some are due to printing and typesetting errors, some to omissions, and a few to problems inherent in the system (though there are far fewer of these than in most comparable works). The major flaws, as I see them, are few enough to list. In doing so, I hope to emphasize how good the overall system is and to note a few things that may need addressing in future editions.

So what is wrong with ***Striker***? For one thing, the vehicle and weapon design rules are incredibly complex and require constant leafing back and forth between Book 3 and the design sequence booklet – and occasionally the other books for complete understanding. It doesn't take quite as long to design a tank as it does a ***High Guard*** starship, but it can come close. Unless you're a mathematical whiz, you'll want to make sure you have your pocket calculator handy at all times. Some designs don't work out well or are extremely tricky to figure out; you have to be careful when putting energy weapons on vehicles with energy-draining propulsion systems, for instance. The design system just isn't as simple as some might like.

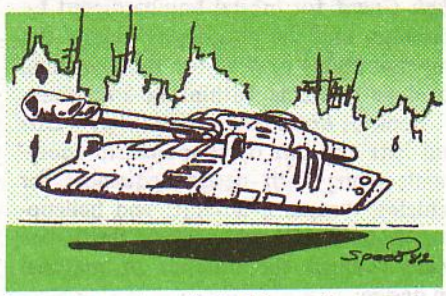
I'm not totally satisified with the helicopter design rules; while other vehicles and craft can be designed almost from scratch, these must be taken from a single table, leaving little variety. The aircraft rules are a bit sketchy, too, when compared to the other rules; they seem to have been added as optional rules, mainly for completeness, and may not play a great part in most ***Striker***-related actions.

The game scale is another problem, one common to miniatures games. The



1:1000 scale seems grossly off for 15mm figures, especially if miniature buildings are to be used. This is difficult to prevent without having a playing area too big for most rooms. Using 1/285 miniatures at the scale for the 15s here would produce a greater picture of reality (and more vehicles are available in this scale than 15mm), but that would lose some of the flavor the ***Traveller*** 15s provide. Another possible problem with the scale, pointed out to me by Don Gallagher, is that it is set up mainly for infantry; vehicles (especially grav vehicles and aircraft) can travel far too swiftly in this scale, making their use difficult at times. Also, to simulate close combat, it will be necessary to use AHL, as ***Striker*** can't really handle such close action.

Another problem with the system is the rule for combined armor values. If a soldier wearing battledress is hiding behind a brick wall and is hit, the armor values of the wall and armor are not added together, as might be expected. Additional armor has a negative-gain effect, so that less than the total protection of each is provided when they're added together. This may actually happen in some cases, but it seems that a bullet, after penetrating several cms of brick, would be less, not more, capable of penetrating battledress. Also, note that if a character is hit



in an area not protected by such cover, ignoring armor for the moment, the wound is considered more severe than indicated on the damage tables for vital spots. This is an area that could use some expansion.

Another concept I have some questions about concerns the continued existence of the four-man fire team at higher tech levels. It seems that as weapons become more deadly, units would become more dispersed to avoid higher casualties caused by high-radius burst weapons, until the basic unit would become the single infantry soldier. When one battledress-protected, FGMP-15-wielding soldier with a grav belt can pack as much fire power as a modern squad, why bother with fire teams – unless you want to provide the enemy with more targets?

There are some omissions – though not many – of items I had expected to be included from advance notices and seminars on the game. For instance, flame throwers and flame weapons in general are not covered at all, except for the smoke effects of incendiary rounds. But these and others are probably items that had to edited out of the final draft in favor of more important items and rules. Hopefully, they will appear in future supplements.

As a brief note to those who have the first printing of ***Striker*** and noted, among a few other points, the missing Laser Penetration Table, an errata sheet appears in *Journal* 12 which includes this table and a revised Grav Vehicle Speed Table among other corrections that are to appear in the second printing.

In the light of the overall value and usefulness of the system, it seems pointless to nitpick. Despite such problems as I mentioned above, ***Striker*** is probably the most thorough, well-conceived and worthwhile set of miniature rules yet published for SF or any post-19th century conflict. I heartily recommend it to ***Traveller*** players and miniature enthusiasts and look forward to future expansions.

Striker is designed by Frank Chadwick and published by Game Designers' Workshop. It retails for $12.00 and contains three rulebooks, design sequence table booklet, two sheet of tables, and two dice, boxed.

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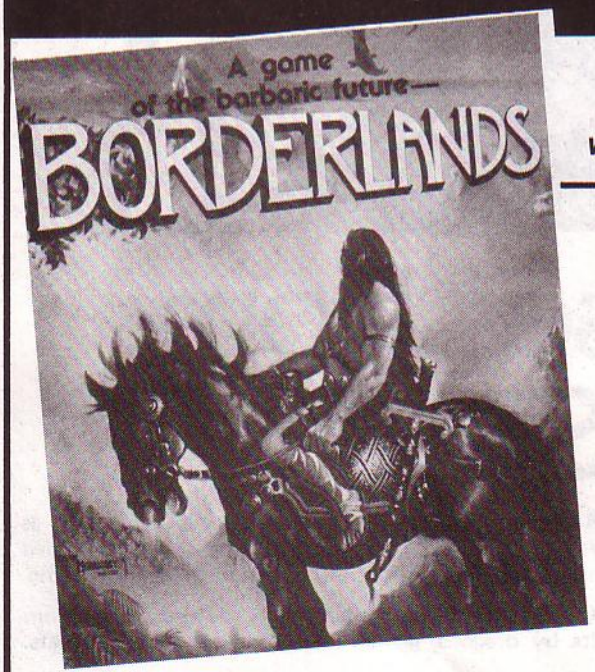

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ASTEROID PIRATES (Yaquinto); $9. Designed by Michael S. Matheny. 8-page rulebook, 12" x 24" map, 120 counters, two dice, 4 play-aid sheets, "Album Game" format. 2 to 4 players. Published 1980.

ASTEROID PIRATES is a game of tactical ship-to-ship combat in the asteroid belts. Each player chooses to be a transport/cover squadron leader or a pirate squadron leader. The transport/cover squadron consists of three transport ships and three escort fighters. The pirate squadron consists of two groups of three fighters (red and yellow). Each player uses a set number of points to "build" his ships by allocating them to certain ship characteristics (speed, laser power, etc.). The transport squadron is also allocated a certain number of cargo points. Players set up at opposite ends of the mapboard. The transport/cover squadron must cross the board dodging randomly-moving asteroids and the pirate squadron, exiting on the pirate side of the board. The pirate squadron must destroy as many of the transport/cover squadron as possible.

The game has a simple and solid theme. Each player may use only so much power per ship turn, so some aspects of combat vs. power usage are simulated. The asteroids moving randomly over the board (by die throws) provide an extra bit of tension, as well. There are options for critical hits on a ship, causing a chain reaction leading to destruction from a single laser or missile hit.

However, for all of its fine points, the game suffers from an all-to-common problem – rules ambiguity. Topics are not consolidated (such as missile movement/attack) to provide information at a glance, and some information (such as effects of tractor beam attacks) is left out altogether in the Attack Effect section. Games can go on continually with little activity other than moving counters and rolling dice.

In conclusion, ASTEROID PIRATES is a fine game for those who: a) like good, simple (and repairable) combat mechanics; b) like to correct and expand vague rules; and c) have always wondered what chess with dice was like.

–Earl Perkins

GRAND MASTER OF THE MARTIAL ARTS (Wind Warrior Co.); $14.95. Designed by Chris Goedecke. 26-page rulebook, 112 playing cards, score sheet pad, boxed. 2 to 6 players; playing time less than an hour. Published 1981.

In this card game, players try to gain mastery of cards representing 15 unarmed martial arts. Masters are acquired by cards indicating days of practice, and lost by defeat in battle. The combat is completely abstract. Contestants play special cards for attack and defense and various options; a battle ends when a contestant does not have a card to respond to the last play by the opponent.

Twenty years ago, a French game called ***Mille Bornes*** (Thousand Miles), in which players accumulated distance marker cards while using other cards to impede opponents, was extremely popular. GRAND MASTER is similar and deserves even greater popularity. It is simple enough for anyone to learn, yet the mixture of luck and strategy is thoroughly intriguing. You need not be a practioner of any martial art to derive enjoyment. The rules discuss the philosophy of the game, and are quite coherent – although the typeface in some paragraphs is odd. Even the cards themselves are a joy: Beautifully illustrated with appropriate figures, martial arts fighters and weapons.

figures, martial arts fighters and weapons.

Sadly, there is yin as well as yang in GRAND MASTER. The game is outrageously expensive. While the game can provide infinite entertainment, most of us don't have infinite finances. A wargamer won't find sufficient conflict simulation, nor will a role-play gamer gain enough involvement, to justify the cost.

But GRAND MASTER is still exciting, entertaining, and attractive to wargamers, role-players, budding martial artists, and anyone else willing to try it.

–Ronald Pehr

HIGHWAY 2000 (Threshold Games, P.O. Box 51553, New Orleans, LA 70151); $10.00. Designed by Russell Neal. 11" x 8½" ten-page rule booklet, 8½" x 11" cardstock sheet of commonly used tables, 8½" x 7" 27-sheet pad of Vehicle Control Sheets, 57 die-cut counters, three 8-1/8" x 11" cardboard highway sections, 6½" x 6¾" ziplock bag, boxed. 2 or more players; playing time 30-60 minutes. Published 1981.

In this game of combat on the highways of the near future, each player chooses and arms his vehicle(s). These selections are recorded on each player's Vehicle Control Sheet. Movement is plotted on these sheets and play begins. Opponents roll randomly for highway encounters, move their vehicle counters, and shoot each other.

The game is really quite simple to play and understand; the play examples aid comprehension here. The highway sections provided are constructed of *thick* cardboard and will probably survive anything up to a direct hit from a case of carbonated beverages. The variety of weapons and scenarios helps make the game more enjoyable each time it is played.

Unfortunately, the rules are sparse and shallow; there are only two *solid* pages of rules in the ten-page rulebook. The artwork, especially in the rulebook, is quite crude. But most importantly, rules for non-linear movement (or a non-highway scenario) don't appear.

I feel that if rules for expanded movement and 'off-road' scenarios had been included, then HIGHWAY 2000 might have lived up to its $10 price tag. In its present condition it just doesn't have enough substance for $10. Unless you have dollars to burn, I would not recommend purchasing this game.

–Tom Gordon

WIZARD'S REALM (Mystic Swamp); $10. Designed by Cheryl Whitfield Duval. 8½" x 11" 64-page rulebook, 17" x 11" pull-out map. 6-, 10-, and 20-sided dice needed but not included. Variable number of players; playing time indefinite. Published 1981.

WIZARD'S REALM is a fantasy role-playing game. It has player-characters with medieval weapons, magic spells, and monsters cribbed from myth, literature, and other games. The prime feature is a simple, clever combat system: Attackers' basic attributes, weapon, skill, and luck are subtotaled into one die roll, defenders' basic attributes, weapon or armor, skill, and luck in another; if the attacker has a positive difference, that much damage is dealt to the defender.

It's not the quickest system around, nor the most lifelike simulation, but it's an excellent compromise. Equally excellent is character development. The usual experience points, levels, and hit dice are blended with a skill acquisition system; each character is unique. WIZARD'S

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REALM characters don't have a plethora of abilities just because they elect a character class, but they get good at the abilities they practice. To top off the goodies, there's a sample town to start players in, an adventure scenario, and heartbreakingly cute illustrations.

The fun is spoiled by lack of attention to detail. Pages are out of order, rules on a particular subject require page-flipping, and some necessary rules require sheer guesswork (e.g., is a "barrel helm" large or small?). Supremely annoying is the lack of attack and defense numbers for typical monsters, and for the characters in the sample scenario. Having to figure out each individual negates the effective simplicity of the combat system.

The difficulties and discrepancies can be overcome. The question is, will anyone want to overcome them? WIZARD'S REALM can provide FRPG adventures in a satisfactory manner, but is not so fascinating, original, and detailed that people will abandon other games to come flocking. However, the price is right and someone shopping for a present for a neophyte FRPG devotee-to-be could do a whole lot worse.

–Ronald Pehr

SUPPLEMENTS

THE DUNGEON OF KING LOUT (Infinity Limited); $5.95. Designed by Edward T. Schoonover & Mark R' O'Green. Adventure for all fantasy role-playing systems. 13 loose pages of text, three maps on cardstock paper. Two or more players; playing time indefinite. Published 1982.

THE DUNGEON OF KING LOUT is billed as "adaptable to all role-playing systems," due to the use of Infinity Limited's "infinity stats." The adventure consists of an underground trek to recover an elven princess from the clutches of the evil King Lout and his minions. In order to complete their mission, the characters will travel through at least two of the three separate sections of the dungeon.

Lout's dungeon is somewhat different from most of those on the market: It is an actual, working dungeon underneath an actual, working castle. All areas but one are stocked with humans rather than monsters, making thieving skills more important than in most adventures. A hack-and-slash party will bring twenty or thirty guards down on itself within the first ten feet of tunnel.

The adventure, while not excessively dull, is fairly common dungeon fare. Finding the princess is largely a matter of luck, and the characters could spend a lot of time killing guards before that luck crops up. Not much thinking is involved, even though thieves will be making a few more silent-movement rolls than usual. A few minor glitches crept into the rules, such as the reference in a room description to a secret passage which does not appear on the map; but a competent GM can sort these out. The biggest disappointment, though, is the "infinity stats," which aren't really stats at all. Guards, monsters, and magic items are discussed in vague adjectives, leaving all the dirty work of making up stats to the GM. (This does leave the adventure open to all levels of characters, though . . .)

As good as just about anything else on the market, THE DUNGEON OF KING LOUT is fine if the GM doesn't mind fleshing out details and statistics. As is, though, most GMs could do as well on their own without much more effort. At $5.95, it's not worth it.

J. David George

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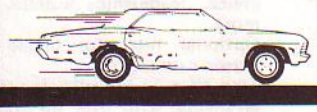

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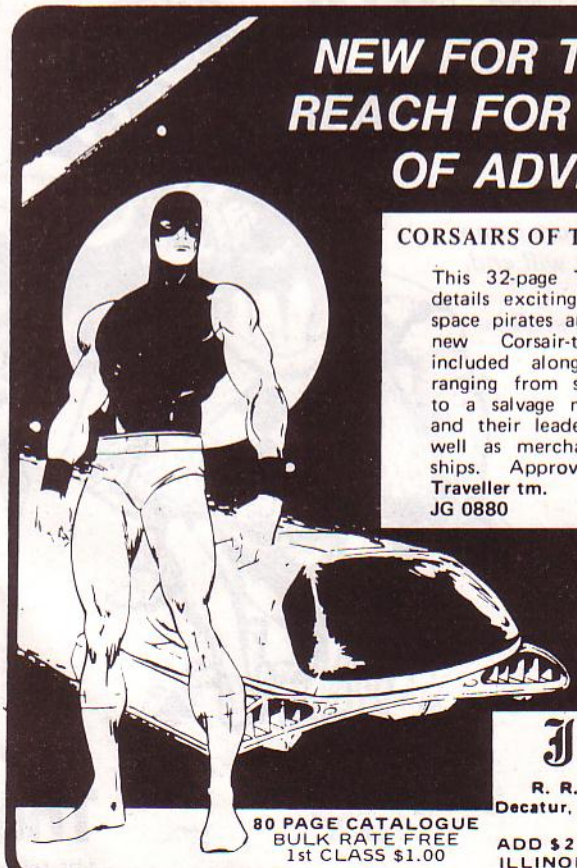

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THE ILLHIEDRIN BOOK (Judges Guild); $3.95. Designed by Daniel Hauffe. Approved for use with ***Advanced Dungeons and Dragons***. 32-page, 8½" x 11" booklet. Number of players unspecified; 6 hours to play. Published 1981.

This scenario is designed for first level characters, with perhaps one or two second level characters coming along. The wizardess Alcastra wants the Illheidrin Book, formerly owned by a 300-year-dead wizard, and she's willing to help equip a party and send it out to look for the book. Unfortunately, whe doesn't know exactly where the book is. And the neighborhood is crawling with patrols of invading orcs. The adventurers end up heading through the countryside, picking up clues and avoiding orcs. There is a mysterious crypt to be dealt with somewhere along the way.

This is a good, sound adventure; I wish more of these were available for low-level characters. There are complete descriptions of everything you might run into, *including* Alcastra's Tower (for those who attack everything in sight). The DM will have no trouble with this adventure.

Judges Guild still falls short of perfection. There are minor discrepancies between maps and descriptions. The artwork takes up space instead of supporting the adventure. I can't explain why Lieutenant Sladentail is pictured as a griffon when he's human, and I suspect Alcastra is naked on the cover to spark sales. Worst of all, the characters are never really fleshed out – the DM will know how to run them, but he may never figure out why they are in this adventure in the first place. A good adventure, but still short of excellent.

I urge everyone who plays AD&D to buy this one. It's a challenge to anyone with a first-level character, and a solid example for the newcomer DM.

–W. G. Armintrout

MERCHANT PRINCE, Special Supplement 1 (GDW); $2.50 (as an insertion in JTAS 12). Designed by J. Andrew Keith. 6" x 9" 16-page pull-out booklet. Published 1982.

Nestled in the center of *Journal of the Traveller's Aid Society* 12 is MERCHANT PRINCE, GDW's official expansion for the merchant service. Designed by the prolific J. Andrew Keith, this provides an expanded character generation system *al la Mercenary* for characters in the merchant service, much in the same manner as Paranoia Press' ***Merchants & Merchandise***. In fact, MERCHANT PRINCE shows some influences of M&M (though these could be coincidental) while displaying several unique aspects. For one, MP splits the merchant service into three categories: sector-wide shipping lines, subsector-wide lines, and Free Traders. There are restrictions on joining the first two categories, based on the starport type of a character's homeworld, but anyone may join the Free Traders. Upon enlisting, characters must choose one of three branches of service (except in the Free Traders): engineering, purser's, and deck. Skills that become available to characters are those appropriate to traders rather than combatants (though some combat skills are available) and depend largely on the character's department or category of service. Bonuses replace decorations on the assignment resolution tables and promotions are handled independently. Pre-enlistment options such as college, the Merchant Academy, medical school, or business school are also available. Four new skills (trader, broker, legal, and melee combat) may be learned by merchant characters.

The promotion method is handled nicely. Characters may take exams to rise in rank, provided they are serving in a position at their current rank (not always available), and gain new skills if they pass and don't already possess them. The inclusion of gunnery skill, absent in M&M, fills a curious gap in Paranoia's rules. With only a couple of exceptions, the rules of MERCHANT PRINCE are clearly written and quite easy to follow.

The only major error I could detect was on the Special Duty table for officers: A roll of 7 lists Management Training; yet there is no explanation of what this is anywhere in the book. A minor gripe is that vacc suit skill is not as easy to get as it should be for a service that depends on starship travel.

Although it probably won't totally supplant ***Merchants & Merchandise*** as *the* book for generating merchant characters, MERCHANT PRINCE is a well-conceived and viable alternative to M&M. Its inclusion in the *Journal* makes it a special bargain. I recommend it to every ***Traveller*** player, especially those who find the merchant life the most appealing.

–William A. Barton

MURDER IN IRLISS (Reston Publishing); $10.95. Designed by Jeffrey C. Dillow. Stand-alone solo adventure using ***High Fantasy*** rules. 170-page trade paperback. One player; playing time indefinite. Published 1982.

The prince has been murdered! As Faren, captain of the Irliss Guards and protector of the Irliss nobility, your task now is to find the murderer. With your trusty Fatestone, you must find the clues to pinpoint the proper suspect, while at the same time staying one step ahead of those who would love to see you fail.

As the introduction to this adventure states, this is not your typical "rat maze" solo adventure. It's on an open-ended game that ends only when you feel you have enough clues to solve the murder, if you aren't killed first. It's possible to get through and win without ever drawing your sword – the game emphasizes the thinking approach. There are no instant-death traps here; in almost all cases you're given fair warning beforehand. The game also has a crude memory system that allows for actions you've taken and people you've met.

Although I don't mind playing an already made-up character, at times I find it annoying when the game says, "You are thinking this..." or "You know this must mean . . ." when I wasn't thinking anything of the sort. And, while picking a different Fatestone will change the outcome, once you've solved one Fatestone you know where to go to get enough clues to solve the others.

If the high price doesn't put you off, you should purchase this just to see how well a solo adventure can be done when done properly. It's by far the best one I've played yet.

–David J. Arlington

TEGEL MANOR (Judges Guild); $4.50. Designed by Bob Bledsaw and Bill Owen. Approved for D&D. One 17" x 22" judge's map of the manor, one 11" x 17" players' map of the manor, one 8½" x 11" 32-page booklet. Two or more players; playing time indefinite. Published 1980.

Tegel Manor is a great manor-fortress belonging to the Rump family. The only living member of the family is Sir Runic the Rump who has tried to sell the manor, with no luck. Sir Runic would reward anyone who could rid the manor of his corrupt, dead ancestors.

The manor is a large place, with over two hundred rooms and four dungeon levels. A map is given of Tegel Village, a monastery, and a pirate's cove, giving the players other opportunities for adventure. A chart of notable personalities of Tegel Village is given, along with a resurrection chart and a chart for creating magic statues. The manor itself has many innovative tricks and encounters. There is a magical gallery with portraits, ghosts, illustions, floating objects, mystic organ music, and all the other items traditionally found in haunted houses.

Some of the descriptions and abbreviations need deciphering. There is no real guidance for the DM in certain situations. Judges Guild has its usual typos, but none will really throw the DM.

With a little effort, TEGEL MANOR makes an enjoyable addition to any D&D campaign.

–Mike Kardos

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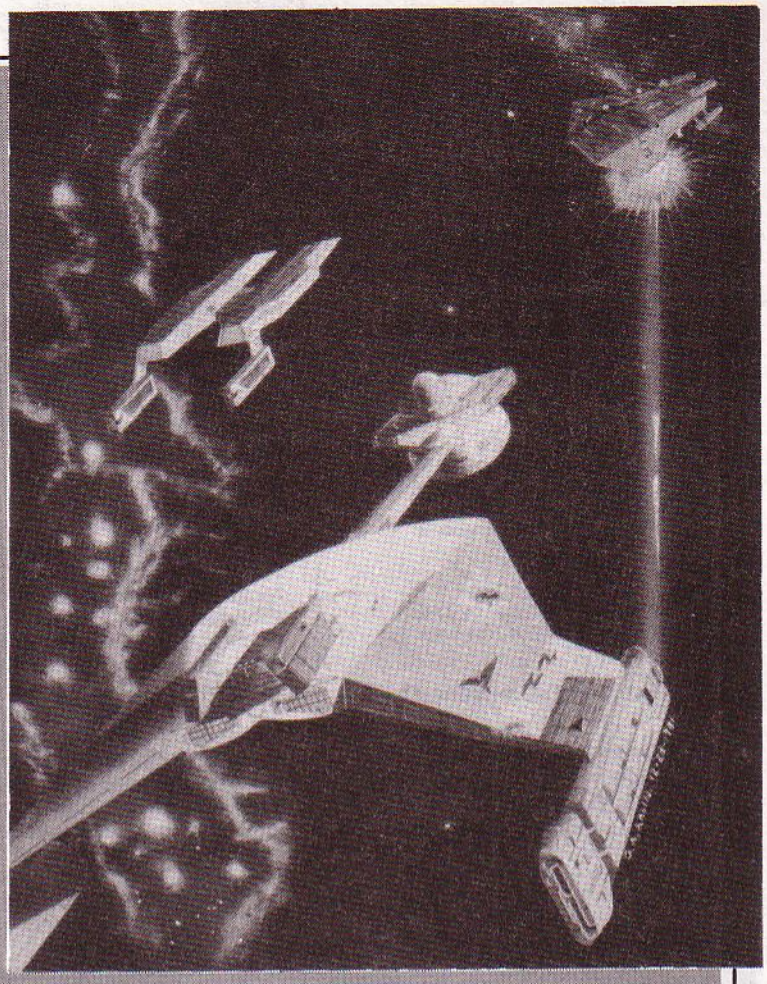

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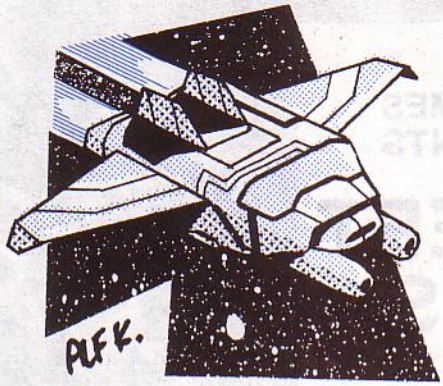

TRADING TEAM (Marischal Adventures); $1.50. Designed by J. Andrew Keith. Approved for ***Traveller***. One 8½" x 11" four-page folio. Number of players and playing time indefinite. Published 1982.

TRADING TEAM takes place in the Reavers' Deep sector between the Imperium and the Aslan Hierate. The crew of the far trader *Scotian Huntress* is assigned to open up trade with the natives of the planet Htalrea for the valuable scent glands of a beast called a risth. The natives seem open to trade offers, but due to some unusual customs, the crew find themselves trekking after the risth themselves. Matters can be complicated by the fact that the Aslan have a monopoly on trade with the world – and may not appreciate the characters' presence should it be discovered. And then there's that nasty risth. . . .

TRADING TEAM is relatively complete for such a brief adventure, including a map of the section of Htalrea where the players will be hunting, an animal encounter table and background info. Though somewhat limited in scope, the adventure allows plenty of room for referee inventiveness, yet should be easily playable in an evening (unless, of course, the ref opts for Aslan intervention).

What few faults are evident in TRADING TEAM are basically due to the restrictions of the folio format. Some info has to be left out, though most of what was omitted may be found in other ***Traveller*** materials. I might have liked a bit more info on the risth, too, though the cover illustration helps on this.

TRADING TEAM is another worthy addition to the ***Traveller*** line. Unless you just don't like short folio adventures, it'll provide you with an interesting evening of ***Traveller*** role-playing.

–William A. Barton

ARCADE GAMES

DEMON ATTACK (Imagic); $25.99. Designed by Rob Fulop. Cartridge for the Atari. Casette and 8-page rulebook. One or two players; playing time indefinite. Published 1982.

This is a "Space Invaders"-type shoot-'em-down where the invaders are demons resembling different kinds of birds, fish, and generally weird creatures. There are 12 different waves of these monsters, and ten games. The first eight games are for one or two players, with straight or guided lasers, either basic or advanced. Games nine and ten allow two players to take 4-second turns against the same waves of demons instead of alternating waves. If a player's opponent gets vaporized in these games, the player gets 500 extra points. Difficulty switches determine the speed of bullets. There are three reserve bunkers at the start. If a player makes it through a wave without getting vaporized, an extra reserve is given him, to a maximum of 6. Score gets higher as the waves get more difficult.

The graphics on this program are excellent. Each wave of monsters looks different. More difficult waves feature demons which split and dive, and whose bullets track the player. It is a fun and different idea, and difficult enough to be challenging.

The limitations of a small program mean that difficulty does not increase after the 12th wave. Instead, the early waves are repeated. Irritatingly enough to the talented player, only five sets of waves can be played before the program blacks out, somewhere between 110,000 and 120,000 points.

This game is interesting and enjoyable, and different enough from other cartridges to recommend it for all who must "play Atari today." The price is in line with other such programs and I think the fun of the game makes the price reasonable.

–Jan Yarnot

PAC-MAN (Atari); $34.95. Cartridge for the Atari. Includes cartridge and 8-page instruction book. One or two players; playing time one to five minutes. Published 1982.

Though PAC-MAN bears the same name as its arcade counterpart, the mechanics vary somewhat. The maze is different, but it's still a maze with many dashes in the corridors waiting to be gobbled. The Pac-Man, which is controlled by the joystick, goes around gobbling the dashes and the "power pills," which allow it to eat the "ghost quartet." The ghosts are all the same color and seem to follow the same type of pursuit, unlike the arcade version. Every time a

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player clears all the dashes off the screen, he gains a new "life" for his Pac-Man. Variations change the speed of the Pac-Man and/or the ghosts.

At last it is possible to play PAC-MAN in your own home. The variability of speed makes it easy to learn the basics before moving up to the faster and more challenging games.

The graphics are so-so to poor. The dashes are the same color as the walls and a lone dash can be difficult to see quickly on the screen. The ghosts turn blue when a power pill is eaten and then revert to nasty Pac-eaters moments later, but it is difficult (given the transparency of the ghosts) to tell exactly when the color is changing. The new life after every screen makes this version easier than the arcade version, and the similarity of the ghosts takes away some of the flavor.

If you must have PAC-MAN for your home, then this is it, but if you're hesitant, there are enough differences in this version to suggest passing it by.

–Richard A. Edwards

STAMPEDE (Activision); $29.95. Designed by Bob Whitehead. Cartridge for the Atari. Includes cartridge and instruction booklet. One player; playing time one to five minutes. Published 1981.

In STAMPEDE, the player uses a joystick to move his horse and rider vertically and the button to throw a lasso. Points are gained by roping different colored cattle, worth different amounts of points. In order to keep the cattle in front of the horse, the player must "herd" them by guiding his horse to touch the lagging cow. Unherdable obstacles appear, and if approached too close they will cause the horse to rear, thus losing control. The game lasts until the number of cattle allowed to fall behind is reached. This number starts at three and increases one for every 1000 points captured.

At first, STAMPEDE sounds like a typical shooting gallery with cattle filling in for ducks and the rope for a gun, but it isn't so. STAMPEDE is one of the fastest and craziest games either Atari or Activision has yet produced. The key to the game is not roping, but herding. The game ends when enough cattle have passed behind the rider, and no one can rope fast enough to capture all the Angus, Jerseys, Guernseys, and Herefords coming at him. The solution is to move behind the cattle and nudge them into running ahead again and again while capturing some to make points and watching out for obstacles. This takes more thinking and planning than many arcade games.

The only problem with the game is the noise of points being scored. Why is it that video game companies think that home games must be as loud as arcade centers? In STAMPEDE, points are scored fast and the counter rolls up one point at a time, making a loud beep as every one goes by. Sometimes it can take several second for the score (and noise) to catch up to the current total. The TV volume can be turned off, but then the other interesting sound effects are missed.

This is one of the best combined strategy and action games for the Atari system. Go rope yourself a copy, pardners.

–Richard A. Edwards

PUBLICATIONS

THE BEST OF THE JOURNAL OF THE TRAVELLERS' AID SOCIETY, Vol. 2 (GDW); $2.50. Edited by Loren K. Weisman. 48-page 6" x 9" booklet. Published 1982.

GDW has released THE BEST OF THE JOURNAL, Vol. 2, a collection of articles from issues 5 through 8, which are out of print. BOTJ2 reprints several Amber Zone scenarios, including "The Werewolf Disease," "Foodrunner," and "Pursue and Destroy," a mercenary scenario using the AHL/*Striker* combat system. Articles that have been reprinted include "The Traveller Stock Exchange," "Speculation Without a Starship," "The Imperial Interstellar Scout Service," "R&R" (carousing in Startown), and "The Umpire Strikes Back," J. Andrew Keith's guidelines on refereeing. Also featured are the *Contact!* entries on the Vargr and Aslan, Roger Moore's Bestiary articles on Dolphins, and two Ship's Lockers (the one on the LSP Pressurized Shelter and the one containing Lifeboats, Rescue Balls, and the Hostile Environment Kit).

All the reprinted articles seem to have been chosen for maximum utility to referees and players. Each is reprinted in its entirety (unfortunately including typos, etc.) and will be especially welcome to anyone who missed an issue.

A couple of minor problems: The R&R article is mistitled Amber Zone in the text, and the Amber Zones "Ticket to Swords," "Scam," and "Pursue and Destroy" have the wrong page listings on the contents page. Several articles not reprinted are sorely missed: the Special Psionics from issue 5 (does this mean these have been suppressed?), the Champa Starport from issue 7, and the Broadsword Mercenary Cruiser plans from issue 8 (though these appear in Adventure 7, ***Broadsword***).

Overall, though, THE BEST OF THE JTAS, Vol. 2 should prove welcome to anyone who missed any *Journals* from 5 through 8.

–William A. Barton

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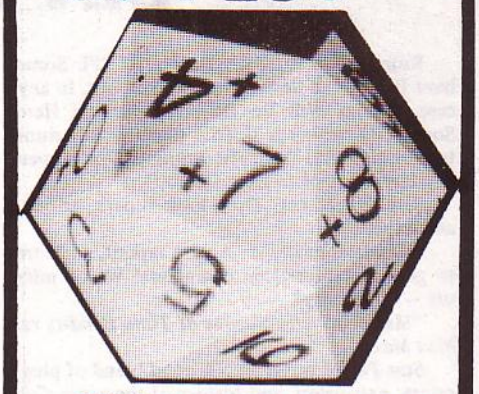

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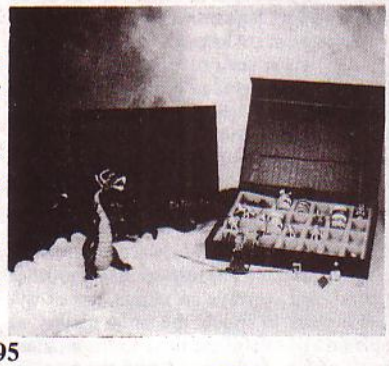

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LETTERS

Rumors fly at TSR's buying of SPI. Some have it that the design staff walked out. In any case, Things Will Be Different 'Round Here Soon. One wonders if TSR planned this stunt to eliminate SPI from the running. Don't open any envelopes from Lake Geneva!

Saw the *boxes.* They look superb, strong, and expensive.

"Handicapped" . . . A neat variant, and sure to generate interesting characters! Wait a minute – no leprosy!

"Magic in" . . . Shades of *Time Bandits vs. Mad Max.*

Star Patrol notes . . . A good blend of plug, errata, expansion, and history-of-the-game. Can you find more like this?

"Computer as Familiar" . . . Interesting! If someone comes out with a pocket video screen soon, game-trained thinkboxes could become standard equipment. Has anyone made any programs for the pocket-sized computers Radio Shack and Panasonic put out?

"School Holiday" . . . Fun, but too long to be devoted to one game system. If described in more general terms, it could also be used for V&V (upcoming Edition Two due soon).

"The Big Ships" . . . Gosh, what an article!

Survey . . . List computer firms *separately* from other game publishers.

Featured Reviews . . . Too long!

PBM policy . . . *Very* responsible and *classy* thing to do! Thank you.

Stefan Jones
Locust Valley, NJ

Comments on TSG. First, I am happy to see you respond to what the people want; in my eyes this makes you a professional magazine. I would like to see TFT, ***Traveller***, ***Car Wars***, ***Champions***, ***The Morrow Project***, and more pages. I also have a couple of ideas for a subscriber bonus: Deck plans for starships with ***High Guard*** stats, or dungeon, labyrinth, or building floor plans all ready for the GM to fill out any way he chooses.

The scenario for ***Champions*** has prompted me into buying that system soon. Thank Mr. Allston for me. Also, your capsule review for ***Ace of Aces*** prompted me into buying that system. AoA is great, easy to learn, and fun to play. Now if only they could do ***Car Wars*** based on that system . . .

Keep up the good work with TSG. I am sorry to see Forrest Johnson go, but that's the breaks. Now if TSG would win Best Magazine Covering Role-Playing . . .

Steve Crotty
Hugo, MN

Well, we're working on several of the topics you mentioned. The primary obstacle is the lack of good submissions on the various game systems. As for more pages – you saw our efforts last issue, and we hope you'll see them again soon.

I've yet to find anyone around the office who would complain about our winning Best Magazine Covering Role-Playing. Keep your fingers crossed.

–AA

SPI sells out to TSR!
I am sickened. I *puke.*
SPI R&D walks out to AH!
I am amused. I *laugh*!
AH + SPI will produce *wargames*!
I am appreciative. I will *buy*!

Gerry Thompson
Arleta, CA

I recently purchased a copy of your ***Killer*** rulebook, which I read with interest. In the course of my reading I came across a Class A item that *does* cause property damage.

I'm referring to the Automobile Bomb on page 24. Turning on any but the very best of amplifiers at full volume (even without any source material) does cause damage to speakers. The more powerful the amp, the greater the damage.

When I say the best of amps, I'm referring to professional or connoisseur equipment costing in excess of $1,500-2,000 for a power amp – not anything that is available for use in a car.

Although the person with a built-in AM radio probably won't notice any difference in sound quality, many persons have invested a great deal of money in a quality car stereo and would be very upset at having their speakers (which may cost several hundred dollars) blown during the course of a game. And it is the person with the high quality system who runs the greatest risk, because he or she often has an amplifier with 30-100 watts RMS per channel.

If you could pass this information on to your readers and change the rulebook in the next printing, I think you will be doing your readers a great service.

Milo B. Shiff
Theodore, AL

Judges Guild replies:

Enclosed find a copy of Frazetta's "Savage Pellucidar" and the black & white for our cover of ***Rogue Moon of Spinstorm*** by Rick Houser, our Art Supervisor. Although the copy is of poor quality, having been reduced to permit the advertising of the poster in our free catalogue, it would require more than an active imagination to equate this as a violation of copyright. Mr. Stackpole has exceeded the bounds of propriety in stating this in your "Featured Review" of a few of our products. Frazetta's pose has the model looking in a different direction, has the right leg extended further forward, has different facial features and expression, has smoother muscle tone, and conveys an impression of dynamic sereneness in much the same quality as the supple and powerful cat next to the woman. The length of hair is different, and the mercenary depicted on Rick's cover is obviously not as well-rounded, indicating a lack of overall conditioning in one environment to achieve muscle tone.

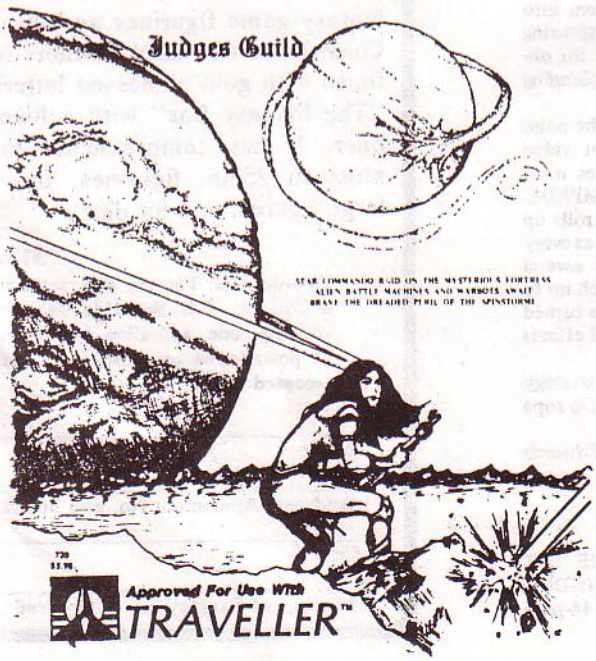
Bob Bledsaw
Judges Guild

P.S.: I find Mr. Stackpole's review to be one-sided (viewed as a competitor bent upon emphasis of shortcomings or imagined shortcomings and glossing over the real value inherent), of little value in comparing what the consumer receives for his dollar, and as analytical as Richard Nixon in justifying Watergate. Do you intend to continue this dribble? If so, I may be forced to contact a lawyer.

BB

While some of Mr. Stackpole's comments in his review may have been cutting, we've yet to see any substantiation that they're inaccurate. But we've printed his review, and we've printed your reply, and our readers can make their own judgements.

–AA



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SAVAGE PELLUCIDAR
18x23

The Martian Chronicle

Phobos Publishing

MARTIANS AID CANADA

VENUSIANS ATTEMPT INVASION OF THE GREAT WHITE NORTH, eh!

Cambridge, Ont. (MPI) Martian intelligence sources revealed today that a Venusian invasion of Canada was imminent. This information, gathered through satellite and tourist reports, has been made available to Canadian officials for several months and advance preparations have been made.

The Republic of Mars, through its envoy Martian Metals has made a small scale invasion of its own. RAFM Co. Inc. of Cambridge, Ontario, has been selected to begin immediate production and distribution of Martian Metals products for the Canadian markets. This move should stem any extensive actions taken by Venusian hosers.

RAFM Co. Inc. will begin the assault by releasing the "TRAVELLER" range to include all the figures and vehicles currently available. This will be followed by the releases of other Martian lines. It is believed the assault will begin in June of 1982 (Terran date). All new releases for "TRAVELLER" will be available from RAFM Co. as soon as they are announced by the home office of Martian Metals.

Now it will be easier to combat the Venusian hosers in their attempts to conquer earth through an invasion of the Great White North, eh!

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MARTIAN INSTITUTE DEVELOPS NEW EDUCATIONAL DEVICE

By Cliff Kussmaul

Vizard Lockmore and Gogn Vroc of the Martian Institute of Technology claim to have discovered a new educational device that can be used to actually raise a person's IQ by a substantial amount. The subject merely concentrates on a certain image or design for a few minutes, and then suddenly becomes more intelligent. The scientist tested the device on a young Martian named Pythrix with amazing results. The youth's IQ rose over 50 points to an incredible IQ of 110! In a few days he learned to tie his shoes and use silverware.

Doctors Lockmore and Vroc are so proud of their device that they have given the MARTIAN CHRONICLE their permission to use this revolutionary method on YOU, the reader. Concentrate on the following pattern for a few minutes and you are certain to become smarter.

Gentle Reader, you are most likely sitting there thinking that this has not helped you at all. You are right. See? You are getting smarter already.

THE GOSTAK DISTIMS THE DOSHES...

DOSHES REVEALED

Martian intelligence sources have recently discovered that earthlings are not familiar with certain aspects of the Martian language, namely the terms "THE GOSTAK DISTIMS THE DOSHES". It is hereby revealed to those who are not versed in the Martian language the meaning of those words. A GOSTAK is an intelligent gamer; DISTIMS means to redeem or send in; and DOSHES are proof of purchase seals or coupons, therefore, the entire statement means "The intelligent gamers send in the coupons."

Now all earthlings will wonder why they should send in these doshes and how to acquire them. Information disclosed to this publication indicates that the doshes may be found on the back of MARTIAN METALS "DRAGONSLAYER" lines of fantasy miniatures. "DRAGONSLAYER" miniatures come in both 15mm and 25mm scale and all doshes are interchangeable for this redemption offer.

All doshes may be redeemed in any combination ie: mixture of both 15mm and 25mm doshes or all of one type.

For every ten doshes distimed you may pick any one of the following items;

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15mm

#03 WIZARDS CABIN . . . . . A wizards cabin in 15mm scale, may be used as any type of log cabin

#04 BATTERING RAM . . . . . A wood covered battering ram for those 15mm battles

#05 WAGON . . . . . An old wooden wagon with two oxen

To get your free fantasy pack send to the address listed below your ten doshes, a note telling us what number you wish to receive and $1.00 for postage and handling.

It was further disclosed that more fantasy packs will be made available in the future.

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SPI's Fate Still Unknown

The situation with the TSR purchase of SPI has taken some unforseen turns in the last few weeks: Contrary to earlier estimations, TSR has not settled with SPI's creditors; Redmond Simonsen was fired by TSR and Brad Hessel resigned shortly thereafter; and the SPI inventory has still (as of press time) not been entered into the TSR distribution channels.

The SPI press release of March 31 announced that TSR had "initiated a legal and economic chain of events" to purchase SPI. Industry observers believed at the time that this involved TSR buying the notes on outstanding SPI debts and foreclosing on the troubled company. Now, however, there are indications that this interpretation was incorrect, and that the outstanding debt to SPI creditors still remains. Current issues of S&T and *Ares*, and games such as ***Battle Over Britain***, are still at the printers, who are awaiting payment before printing will continue.

Observers also theorize that releasing new games under the SPI name could create assets for the unpaid creditors to seize; this could mean that there may be no more games under the SPI label, which could, in turn, mean that there is no more SPI at all.

The reasons for this possible burial of SPI are still vague, but it is probable that the loss of the design arm of that company contributed to the situation. On April 7, eight members of the SPI design staff left to form Victory Games, a subsidiary of Avalon Hill. On May 3, Redmond Simonsen was fired by TSR, and Brad Hessel resigned effective May 14. This left SPI with none of its original design staff, reducing its value to TSR.

While there were already indications that *Moves* was to be folded, TSR evidently had every intention of continuing *Strategy and Tactics* and *Ares*. But no official publication date for either magazine had been announced. It appears there is some possibility of all three SPI magazines ceasing publication.

From the first word of negotiations between SPI and the two companies bidding for it (TSR and Avalon Hill), industry observers saw five assets for SPI to offer: its name, its stock, its design staff, its magazines, and its game copyrights and trademarks. With the design staff gone, the possibility of name and existing stock being dropped to eliminate seizeable assets, and the further possibility of the magazines ceasing publication, it appears that SPI's only remaining asset may be the value of the game designs and trademarks.

On the other hand, there is evidence that SPI is "not dead yet." Established freelance game designers such as Jim Dunnigan and Steve Jackson have been contacted by TSR on new game designs. However, these designs may be for TSR's own historical line, which has received serious effort by the company; of TSR's three Origins Award nominations this year, two have been in the field of miniatures gaming.

In any case, hard data on SPI's eventual fate will probably not be forthcoming for quite some time.

Convention Calendar

July 2-4: NANCON 88-V. Gaming con. Send SASE c/o Nan's Game Headquarters, 118 Briargrove Center, 6100 Westheimer, Houston, TX 77057.

July 9-11: ATLANTA WARGAMING CONVENTION. FRP, boardgaming, Squad Leader. Send SASE to A.S.G.A.R.D., P.O. Box 90952, East Point, GA 30364.

*July 16-18: OKON. SF&F and wargaming. Contact @ P.O. Box 4229, Tulsa, OK 74104.

July 23-25: ARCHON 6. St. Louis SF&F con, with gaming. Contact Archon 6, P.O. Box 15852, Overland, MO 63114, 314-521-9690.

*July 23-25: ORIGINS '82. Adventure gaming convention. Write to Origins 82, P.O. Box 15405, Baltimore, MD 21220, or call 301-539-4634.

July 24-25: KOMMAND CON 82. Wargaming con. Contact @ Kommander's Wargaming Club, P.O. Box 2235, Mansfield, OH 44905.

July 30-August 1: PARACON V. SF&F, wargaming. Contact @ P.O. Box 1156, State College, PA 16801.

*August 6-8: TEXCON 1982. D&D, Car Wars, etc. For more information, send SASE to TexCon 1982, 8028 Gessner No. 1805, Austin, TX 78753.

August 6-8: WORLD SPACE CON '82. SF, current technology. Contact @ 1647 Camelot A-105, Waterloo, IA 50702, 319-233-8620.

August 7-8: BANGOR AREA WARGAMERS CONVENTION. Send SASE for information to Edward F. Stevens, Jr., 32 Masonic St., Rockland, ME 04841, or phone 207-596-0338.

*August 19-22: GENCON XV. Wargaming convention. Contact @ P.O. Box 756, Lake Geneva, WI 53147.

*September 2-6: CHICON IV, aka WORLDCON. World SF convention. Contact @ P.O. Box A3120, Chicago, IL 60690.

September 4-6: PACIFICON. Gaming convention. Contact @ P.O. Box 5548, San Jose, CA 95150.

September 24-26: BABEL CONFERENCE '82. SF&F, comics, wargaming. Contact c/o Dave Marshall, 1160 36th St. SW, Wyoming, MI 49509.

October 1-3: ARMADILLOCON 4. SF convention. Contact c/o Robert Taylor, P.O. Box 9612 NW Station, Austin, TX 78766.

November 12-14: WESTERN RECON '82. SF &F, fantasy gaming. Contact Karl Miller, 837 N. University Village, Salt Lake City, UT, 84108, 801-582-6076.

SJ GAMES and TSG will be attending the conventions marked above with asterisks.

New & Upcoming Releases

Next up from Infinity Limited will be *The Black Vial*, a universal FRP adventure.

Muse Software is releasing *Firebug*, an arcade game for the pyrophile in everyone. The program runs on the Apple II or Apple II+ with 48K and disk drive, and costs $24.95.

The Creative Computing Guide to the Video Arcade Games is due from Creative Computing Press. The title tells all.

Empire of the Petal Throne, produced by TSR in 1975 and subsequently bought by Lou Zocchi, has sold out of the TSR print run. Zocchi announces that the "Players Handbook" will be available soon and that the game itself and its "Sourcebook" will be reprinted by late summer.

Microsoft is announcing a plug-in memory system for the IBM personal computer; called RAMCard, the system provides from 64 to 256K extra for prices ranging from $495 to $1095.

Next up from Automated Simulations/ Epyx will be *The Nightmare*, *Escape from Vulcan's Isle*, *Crypt of the Undead*, and *King Arthur's Heir*. All games are for the Atari 400/800 with 32K and joystick, and retail for $29.95.

The Eternal Curse and *The Hall of Alchemie*, adventures 6 and 7 for *Swordthrust*, have been released by CE Software. CE is also re-releasing the rest of the series in upgraded packaging.

Mayfair Games is the first on a bandwagon with its *War in the Falklands*, a strategic-level game on that South Atlantic conflict; this will be boxed and run $12.00.

Eon's next release will be *Borderlands*, a diplomatic game of expansion and conquest in a barbaric future. The first expansion set is also available. The game retails for $20; the expansion set is $5.

Gamescience/Zocchi Distributors is introducing eight new colors of gem dice: aqua, mint, amber, ice blue, ice green, ice yellow, ice orange, and ice red.

Chaosium has managed to land the rights to the Fritz Leiber Lankhmar series; the company will be releasing a role-playing game on the series based on its BRP system. Another entry in the BRP series will be *Reckless Adventures*, a pulp-era RPG by Lynn Willis. Other projects from Chaosium include a *Questworld* package currently being edited, and a book of solo *RuneQuest* scenarios.

GDW's next projects include *Soldier King*, a negotiate & conquer offering. *Traveller* material is also slated for release in hardbound form, starting with *The Traveller Book*, to be released in July.

Broadsides & Boarding Parties and *VI Ceasars* are games designed by Larry Harris (*Axis & Allies*) and produced by the Citadel store chain of Connecticut and Massachusetts; look for them at Origins.

Heritage will be reentering the field of role-playing games with its FRPG *Swordbearer*, due for an Origins release.

Mysterious Adventures is a series of Acorn Software Produces releases for the TRS-80 I/III; *Arrow of Death Part I*, the first in the series, is available on cassette or disk for $19.95.

World-Wide Wargaming will release a *Squad Leader* scenario booklet containing ten adventures and bearing official Avalon Hill sequential designations; the probable price is $5.

Flying Buffalo, Inc. is due to release *City Book I*, another entry in its universal-FRP "Catalyst" series; *Grimtooth's Traps*, the first entry in that series, has been re-released in upgraded packaging. *Berserker*, FBI's boardgame based on the Fred Saberhagen fiction series, will probably be an Origins release.

Origins Nominations Announced

The Academy of Adventure Gaming Arts & Design has announced the official Origins award nominations for the awards to be presented at Origins '82 in July. The nominees are:

H.G. Wells Awards Nominees

Best Historical Figure Series, 1981: Citadel's Dark Ages, Heritage's 15mm Napoleonettes, Mikes Models' Renaissance, Minifigs' superdetailed 15mm lines, Ral Partha's Condotierre.

Best Fantasy/SF Figure Series, 1981: Citadel's Fantasy Adventurers, Grenadier's Advanced Dungeons & Dragons, Martian Metals' Dragonslayers & Travellers, Ral Partha's Children of the Night, Superior's Wizards & Lizards.

Best Vehicular Model Series, 1981: CinC's 1/285 Armor, GHQ Micro Armor, Martian Metals' Rivets, Superior's 1/2400 Ships, T-Rex's Space Opera Equipment.

Best Miniatures Rules, 1981: Beat to Quarters (Command Perspectives), Car Wars (Steve Jackson), Command at Sea (Metagaming) Empire III (Empire), Harpoon (Adventure Games), Vive L'Empereur (Chaosium).

Best Role-Playing Rules, 1981: Aftermath (FGU), Call of Cthulhu (Chaosium), Champions (Hero), Stormbringer (Chaosium), Universe (SPI).

Best Role-Playing Adventure, 1981: Griffin Mountain (Chaosium), Grimtooth's Traps (Flying Buffalo), Legend of the Sky Raiders (FASA), Ordeal by Eschaar (FASA), Thieves World (Chaosium).

Best Pro Miniatures Magazine, 1981: Campaign, Courier, Fantasy Modelling, Military Modelling, Wargamers Digest.

Best Pro Role-Playing Magazine, 1981: Different Worlds, Dragon, Journal of the Traveller's Aid Society, Sorcerers Apprentice, Space Gamer.

All-Time Best Miniatures Rules for 20th Century Land Battles: Angriff (Z&M), Engage & Destroy (Chaosium), TacForce (GDW), Tractics (TSR), WRG Armor & Infantry (WRG).

All-Time Best Miniatures Rules for pre-20th Century Naval Battles: Beat to Quarters (Command Perspectives), Don't Give Up the Ship (TSR), Heart of Oak (Erisian), Ship o the Line (Battleline).

Charles Roberts Awards Nominees

Best Pre-20th Century Boardgame, 1981: Alamo (SPI), Cedar Mountain (SPI), A House Divided (GDW), Richard the Lion Heart (Mayfair), Sheridan's Ride (Mayfair).

Best 20th Century Boardgame, 1981: Fall of France (GDW), Desert Fox (SPI), Spies (SPI), Task Force (SPI), Wings (Yaquinto).

Best Science Fiction Boardgame, 1981: Car Wars (Steve Jackson), Federation Space (Task Force), Fifth Frontier War (GDW), Invasion: Earth (GDW), Return of the Stainless Steel Rat (SPI).

Best Fantasy Boardgame, 1981: Barbarian Prince (Heritage), The Castle (Mayfair), Dragon Pass (Chaosium), Elric (Chaosium), Undead (Steve Jackson).

Best Initial Release Boardgame, 1981: The Castle (Mayfair), ICBM (Mayfair), Iron Bottom Sound (Quarterdeck), Manassas (Iron Crown), Richard the Lion Heart (Mayfair).

Best Pro Boardgaming Magazine, 1981: Campaign, The General, Fire & Movement, Moves, Strategy & Tactics.

Best Adventure Game for Home Computer, 1981: Crush, Crumble & Chomp (Automated Simulations), Eastern Front (Atari/Chris Crawford), Dragons Eye (Automated Simulations), Ultima (Lord British/California Pacific), Wizardry (Sir-Tech).

Best Amateur Adventure Gaming Magazine, 1981: Abyss, Alarums & Excursions, Deck of Many Things, Journal of WWII Wargaming, The Wild Hunt.

News Briefs

Con Organizers Remove D&D^{tm}

Responding to a request by TSR that no *Dungeons & Dragons*^{tm} games be played at Origins, convention organizers have announced that there will be no official D&D^{tm} tourneys during the con.

English Group Runs Live FRPGs

The Treasure Trap Club organizes *Treasure Trap*, a "live" FRPG. For £30/year plus £1/visit, club members can participate in dungeon-type adventures at Peckforton Castle near Tarvin, Chester. Participants take the parts of "guardians," "elementalists," "scouts," and "lore-wardens" (fighters, magic-users, thieves, and clerics to all intents and purposes) and wander Peckforton's halls, combatting critters and finding treasure. Interested parties can write Carey & Donaldson, P.O. Box 130, Chester CH1 1TD, England.

Eon Announces Cosmic Encounter Tourney

Eon Products president Peter Olotka has announced that a ***Cosmic Encounter*** world championship tourney will be held at WorldCon (aka Chicon). The tourney will last three days, beginning September 3.

Chaosium Averts Borderlands Crisis

Chaosium and Eon Products narrowly escaped a potential marketing disaster: both companies produced products named ***Borderlands***. According to Chaosium's Steve Perrin, Eon managed to notify Chaosium in time for the latter company to alter the name on its product's cover, retitling it ***RuneQuest Borderlands***.

Adventure Gaming Delays Issue

Ral Partha, which owns a controlling interest in Manzakk Publishing, publisher of *Adventure Gaming*, has delayed release of AG's next issue. The magazine is reportedly receiving a close examination by Ral Partha. There is no word at press time as to when or if AG will resume publication.

PBM Update

PBM Update reports on professionally-moderated play-by-mail games. Notices are monthly. Copy deadline is 60 days previous to the first of the month, for the issue in which the notice is to appear. (Deadline for the October issue is August 1.) All copy should be typed and double-spaced. Notices should not exceed 200 words in length. TSG reserves the right to edit copy as necessary.

UNIVERSE III (Central Texas Computing)

Company News: We have just hired two more people: a new keypunch operator and a new programmer. Work on ***Nomads*** (a computer-moderated tribal game) is still progressing, but playtesting is still some time in the future.

Game News:

Quadrant V: Rogue Terrans have become quite a problem in Quadrant V, and have destroyed more than 20 ships to date. Rumor has it that the Etuel are planning action against the more active rogues.

Quadrant VI: Two more worlds have been colonized by Terrans. The Muar, apparently getting the worst of their war with the Alar invaders, are reported to be seeking Terran assistance in maintaining their foothold in the quadrant.

Quadrant VII: Trading has just begun with Etuel planets, some of which are offering high ore prices. The presence of debris from destroyed Alar spaceships suggests a recent war in the quadrant.

Quadrant VIII: Not much to report from this quadrant, which opened in May. Positions in Quadrant VIII are still available.

David Bolduc

UNIVERSE II (Clemens & Associates)

Quadrant I: Mufrid has been besieged by the Regajian forces. Final outcome of the battle is uncertain, but indications are that it will be captured. All Terrans loyal to the Etuel should consider the consequences of allowing this expansion of the Regajian power.

Quadrant II: The Phalanx followed up its Shikasta raid by attacking Ala-Tau. At last report, over a dozen starships and battlecruisers have been lost, with the Phalanx severely crippled.

Quadrant III: A major battle was fought by the PAF defending their home base against the SA Alliance. Both claim rights to the star system.

Quadrant IV: Many alliances now have colony bases to increase their wealth and power. No major friction between them has surfaced so far.

Regajian Empire: The Unity Alliance has been pushed from our Quadrant IV Empire. The bandits stopped at AR15 to murder some innocent Regajians. Our battlefleet in Quadrant I is on the verge of liberating Mufrid from the Etuel oppressors. We will soon know for sure how many Regajians they hold as slaves.

Ixtli Empire: Our forces continue to grow under the leadership of IXV Zartraz. We now can withstand any attack by the Regajians.

Muar Empire: To date we have lost only small outposts to the fleets of Terrans attacking our Empire. They will soon find their losses too great to continue the violation of our Empire.

Jon Clemens

THE TRIBES OF CRANE (Schubel & Son)

Company News: We are pleased to announce that we have sold Mitre Wargames the European rights to ***StarMaster***. Mitre Wargames also runs ***The Tribes of Crane***. For more information write

Mitre Wargames
Lothlorien, Stockdale, Heelands
Milton, Keynes, Bucks
England MK13 7NB

Game News: The Dark Union returned to the fabled ice walls of Columbine with a vengeance after suffering major defeats there in late January. The Dark Union commander Dlam had agreed to work with the women warriors of the Cult in another attempt to overthrow the great northern citadel. The combined Dark Union/Cult forces had assembled over 25,000 warriors, as well as a huge siege train containing many special assault devices designed

Continued on page 40

specifically for use against Columbine's unique ice walls. Confident of victory, Councilman Uymimoz had chosen not to summon allies and chose to defend the city with just the forces at hand, amounting to just over 10,000 warriors. Repeated Dark Union assaults were repulsed as the vailiant city defenders protected their beloved city. The main attack centered around the games with the mighty Cult ram "Grond," propelled by a herd of over 40 mammoths. In the end sheer numbers overwhelmed the city, but not before Uymimoz was able to flee into the frozen north.

STARMASTER (Schubel & Son)

Company News: We have recently opened our third galaxy, the "Sixth Lower Galaxy," located at approximately 0,0,-700. We have also made some changes in the Lifeform Evaluation program giving "hot" technology races many new advantages to offset their normally low production base. When requesting a setup, be sure to mention which galaxy you wish to start in: the Central, with its numerous Elder Races, the densely-populated NorthEast, or the new Lower Galaxy.

Game News: In recent NorthEastern Galaxy attacks by PolySentient Council members, the Khandu Konfederation suffered massive defeats at many of the Khandu subject worlds. Summoning allies, the Khandu is fighting against the mighty PSC, but the battles will probably not end for some time. Rumor has it that an awesome Valkyrian Empire warfleet, fresh from Valkyrian shipyards, is on its way from the Central Galaxy to aid the battered Khandu forces, but the vast distance of the intergalactic void must be traversed before the task force will arrive. In the Central Galaxy, the Republic of Blobvocia attacked the Orion Imperialists' homeworld and in a fierce naval engagement, involving tens of millions of tons of warships, the hundreds of Republic of Blobvocia ships and probes were annhiliated. The fighting in both galaxies has intensified as most empires have joined powerful alliances: only time will tell if the new Lower Galaxy empires prove as aggressive.

George Schubel

BEYOND THE STELLAR EMPIRE
(Adventures By Mail)

Company News: Due to the overwhelming response to BSE, we have acquired a fourth computer system, a Diablo letter-quality printer, and to maintain our fast turn-around time, we are limiting the number of new player setups per week. The first edition of the rulebook has sold out, and by the time you read this we will have a second edition available. This second edition is a completely rewritten and expanded version of the former BSE rule manual.

Adventures By Mail has three completely computer-moderated games in the programming stage, plus we are negotiating with outside designers for rights to moderate their games.

Game News: The Confederation forces have left Teran-Zei, and an FET relief force has replaced them in orbit. The FET expects to recover the captured colony in the next few weeks. There have also been disturbing reports of a Brethen invasion of the FET colony Bane in the Swarm system.

The IAN *Johnny Reb,* a regional patrol coordinator, was destroyed as he attempted to land at IND Eagle on Fairway in the Bluecrab system. IAN forces also report that the Brethen colony Synnax was destroyed by bombardment from Fairway's orbit.

The SMS signed a trading agreement with an Independent colony which resulted in a large increase in their stock price. Seven new colonies began construction in the past four weeks.

GTT Per. Dir. Craylyks has been transferred to the Inner Empire. The new GTT. Periphery Director is Ralf, and the GTT Headquarters colony is now Hypso.

The WCE unveiled its new manufactured item, the Robotic Cargo Handler. This item will greatly increase the ease in which an outpost or colony can be set up.

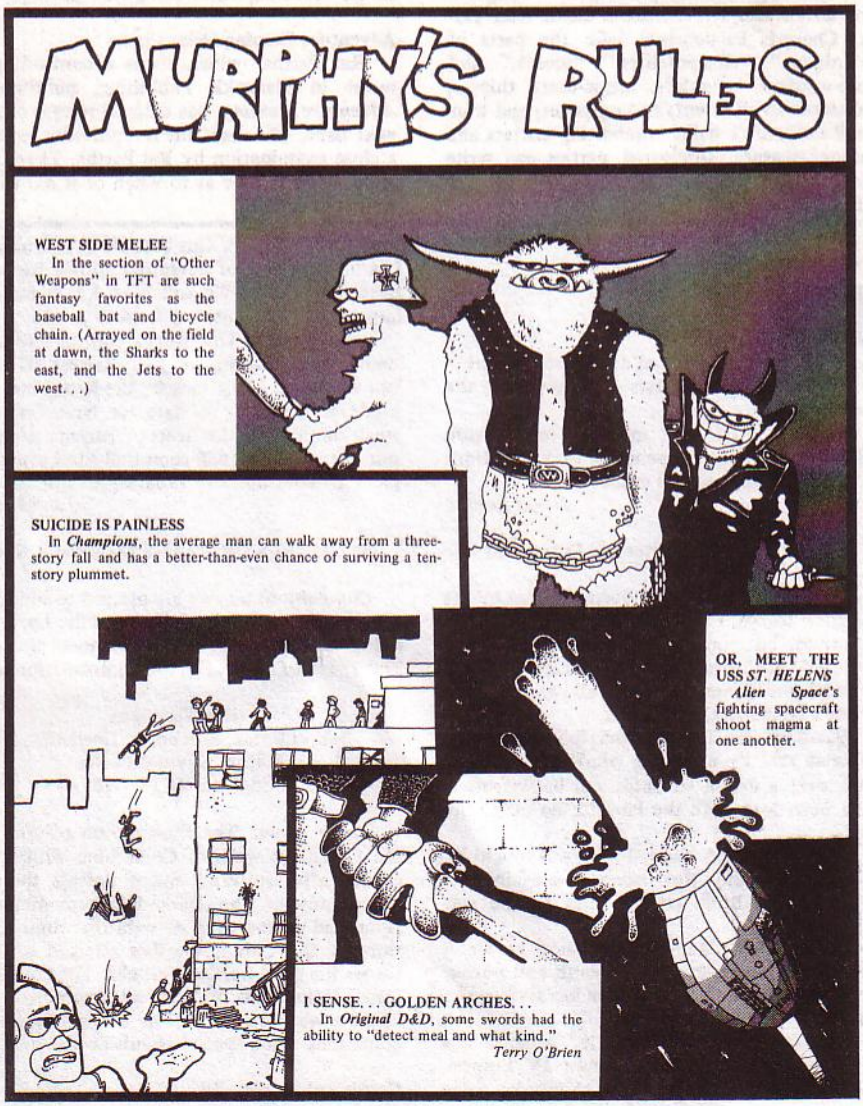
Reports of sightings and battles with Alien ships continue to circulate throughout the Capellan Periphery, but no hard evidence has been forthcoming.

Jack B. Everitt

HIGH FANTASY (Flying Buffalo, Inc.)

Flying Buffalo, Inc. will be running tournaments in our new PBM game, ***Heroic Fantasy***, at various game conventions through the summer, including Summercon in Detroit, June 11-13, Origins in Baltimore, July 23-25, and Gen-Con at Lake Geneva, August 19-22. The game will be run through telephone at our booth in the dealers' room. Prizes will be given away, but most especially, this will be a chance to play 10-15 turns of ***Heroic Fantasy*** in three days.

Rick Loomis



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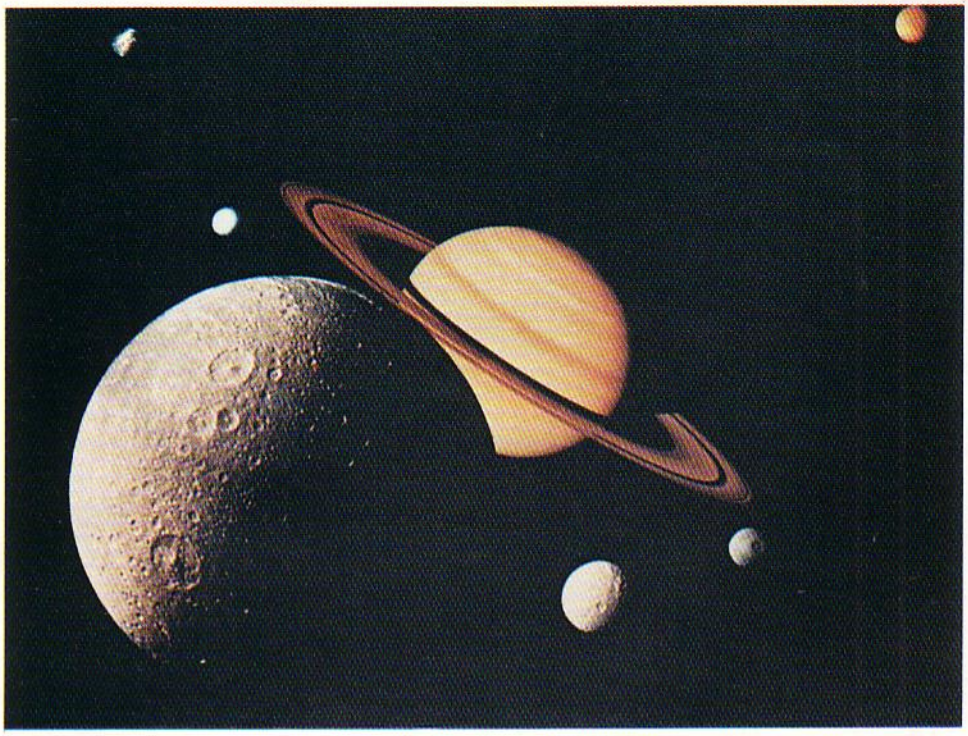
UNIVERSE III



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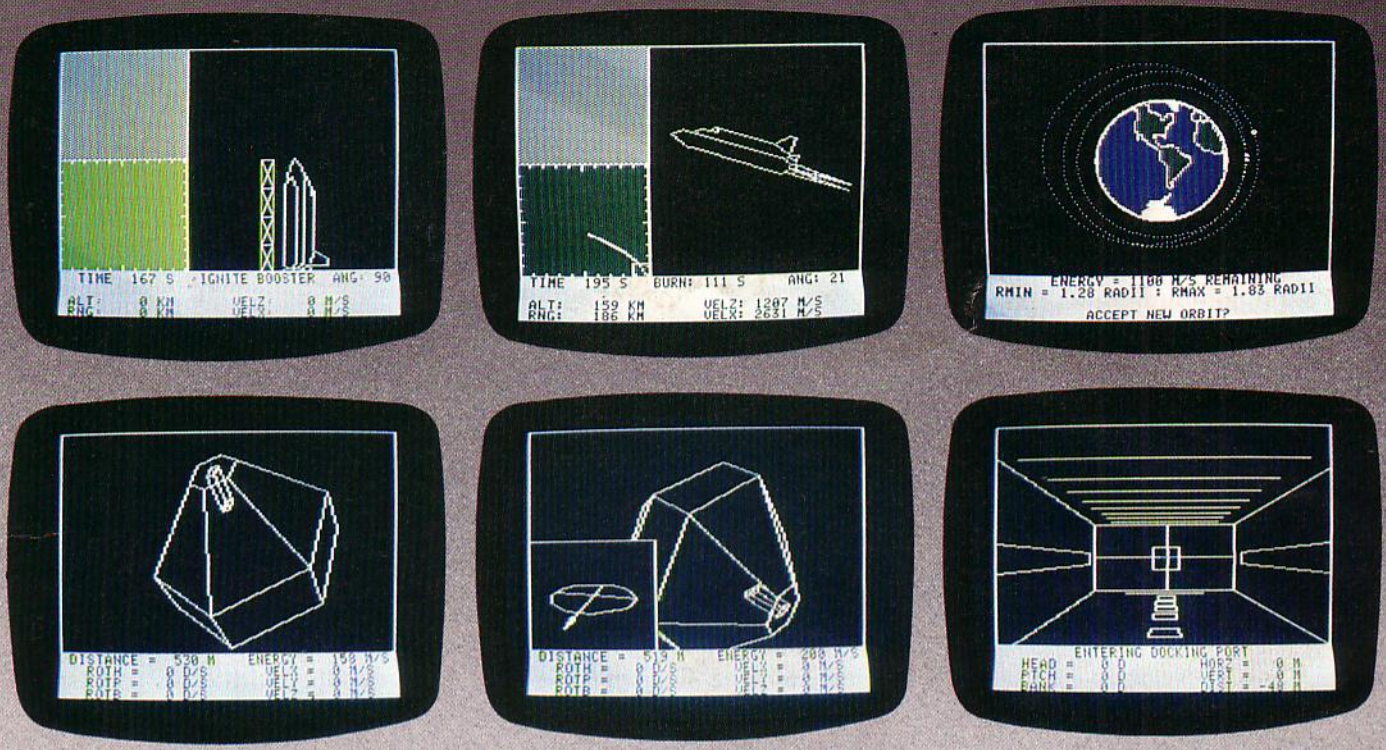

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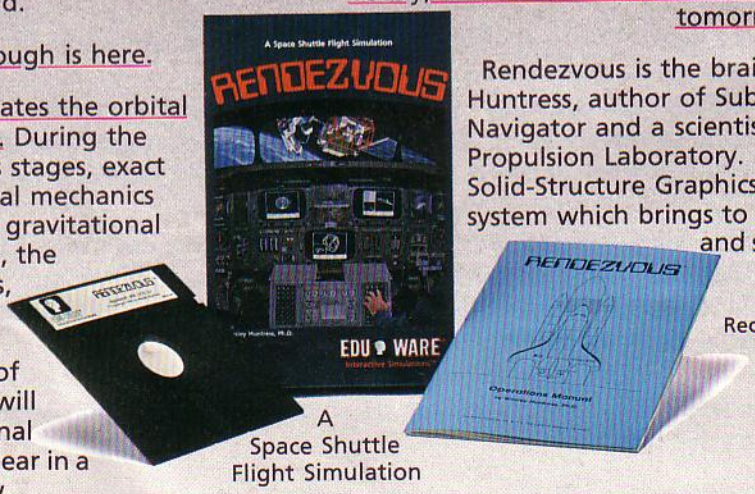

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